CONAN KING-SIZE
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KING-SIZE
MARVEL COMICS GROUP™
SPECIAL ISSUE!
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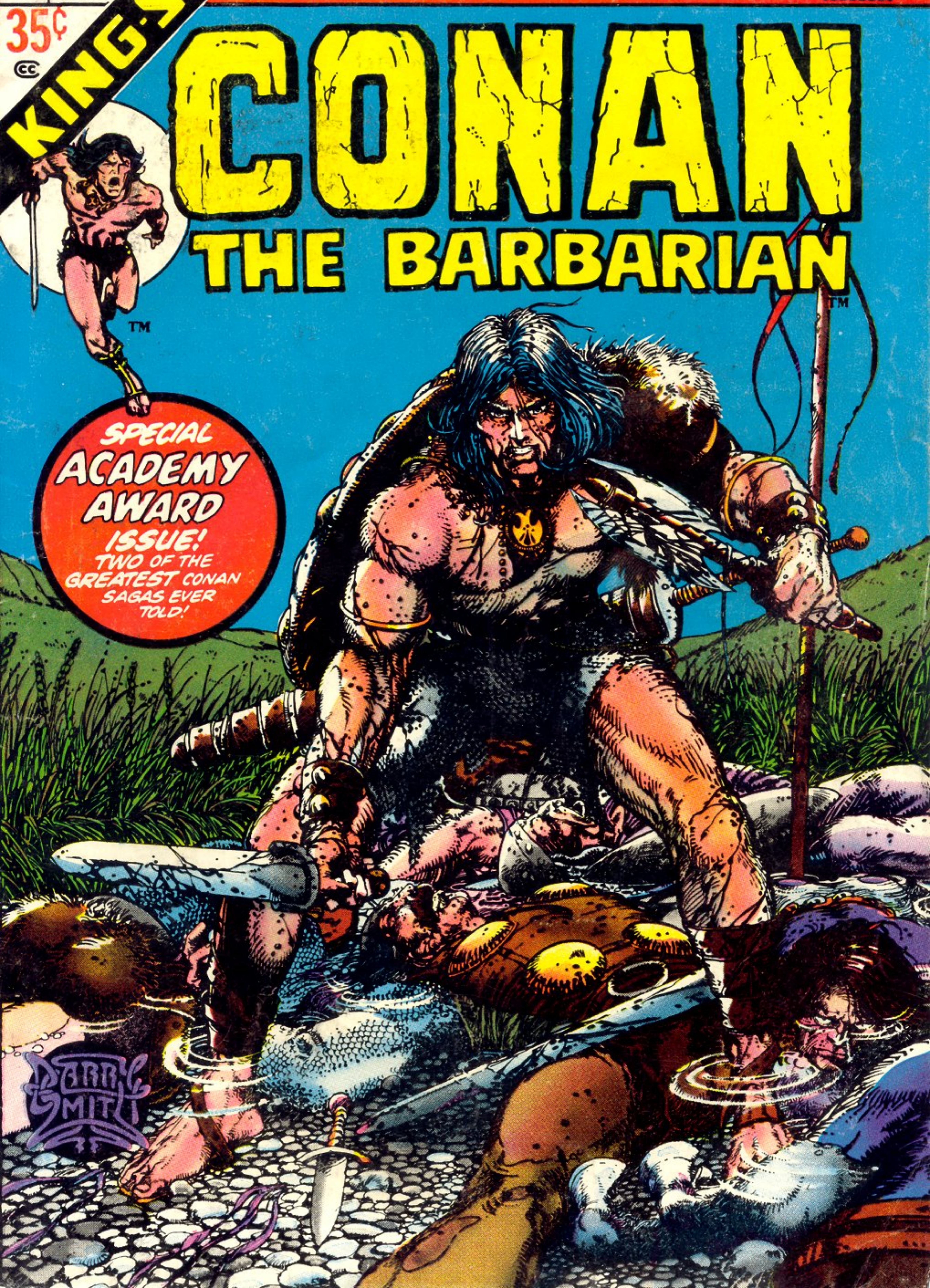
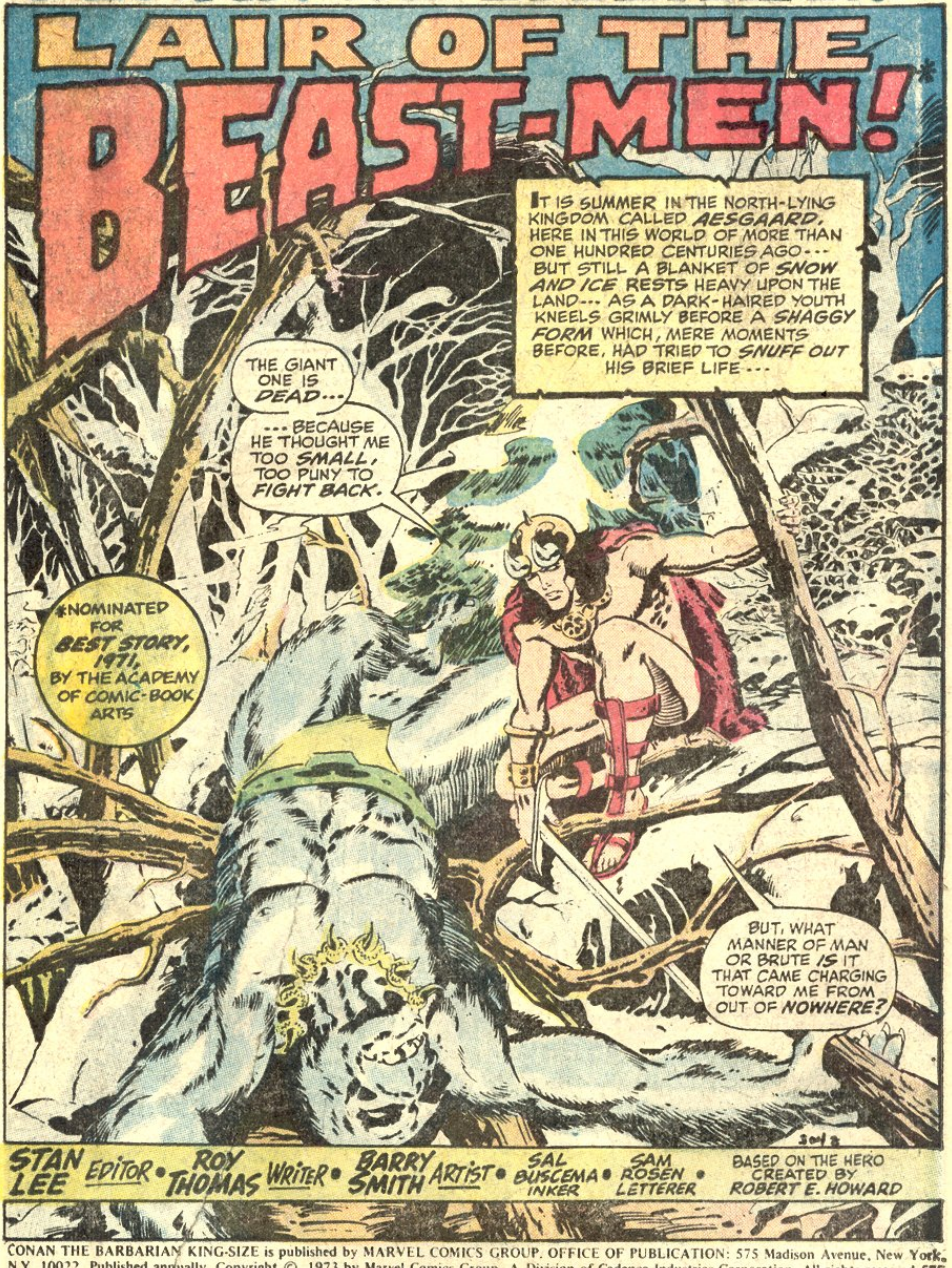
CONAN
THE BARBARIAN™


TM
SPECIAL
ACADEMY
AWARD
ISSUE!
TWO OF THE
GREATEST CONAN
SAGAS EVER
TOLD!
BARRY SMITH

FROM OUT OF EARTH'S DIM, FORGOTTEN PAST-- FROM THE CENTURIES WHICH SPRAWL BETWEEN THE SINKING OF ATLANTIS AND THE DAWNING OF HISTORY--COMES--

CONAN THE BARBARIAN!

LAIR OF THE BEAST-MEN!*


IT IS SUMMER IN THE NORTH-LYING KINGDOM CALLED *AESGAARD*, HERE IN THIS WORLD OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED CENTURIES AGO--- BUT STILL A BLANKET OF *SNOW AND ICE* RESTS HEAVY UPON THE LAND--- AS A DARK-HAIRED YOUTH KNEELS GRIMLY BEFORE A *SHAGGY FORM* WHICH, MERE MOMENTS BEFORE, HAD TRIED TO *SNUFF OUT* HIS BRIEF LIFE---
THE GIANT ONE IS *DEAD*---
---BECAUSE HE THOUGHT ME TOO *SMALL*, TOO PUNY TO *FIGHT BACK*.
*NOMINATED FOR *BEST STORY, 1971*, BY THE ACADEMY OF COMIC-BOOK ARTS
BUT, WHAT MANNER OF MAN OR BRUTE *IS* IT THAT CAME CHARGING TOWARD ME FROM OUT OF *NOWHERE*?
SMITH

STAN LEE EDITOR • **ROY THOMAS** WRITER • **BARRY SMITH** ARTIST • **SAL BUSCEMA** INKER • **SAM ROSEN** LETTERER • BASED ON THE HERO CREATED BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

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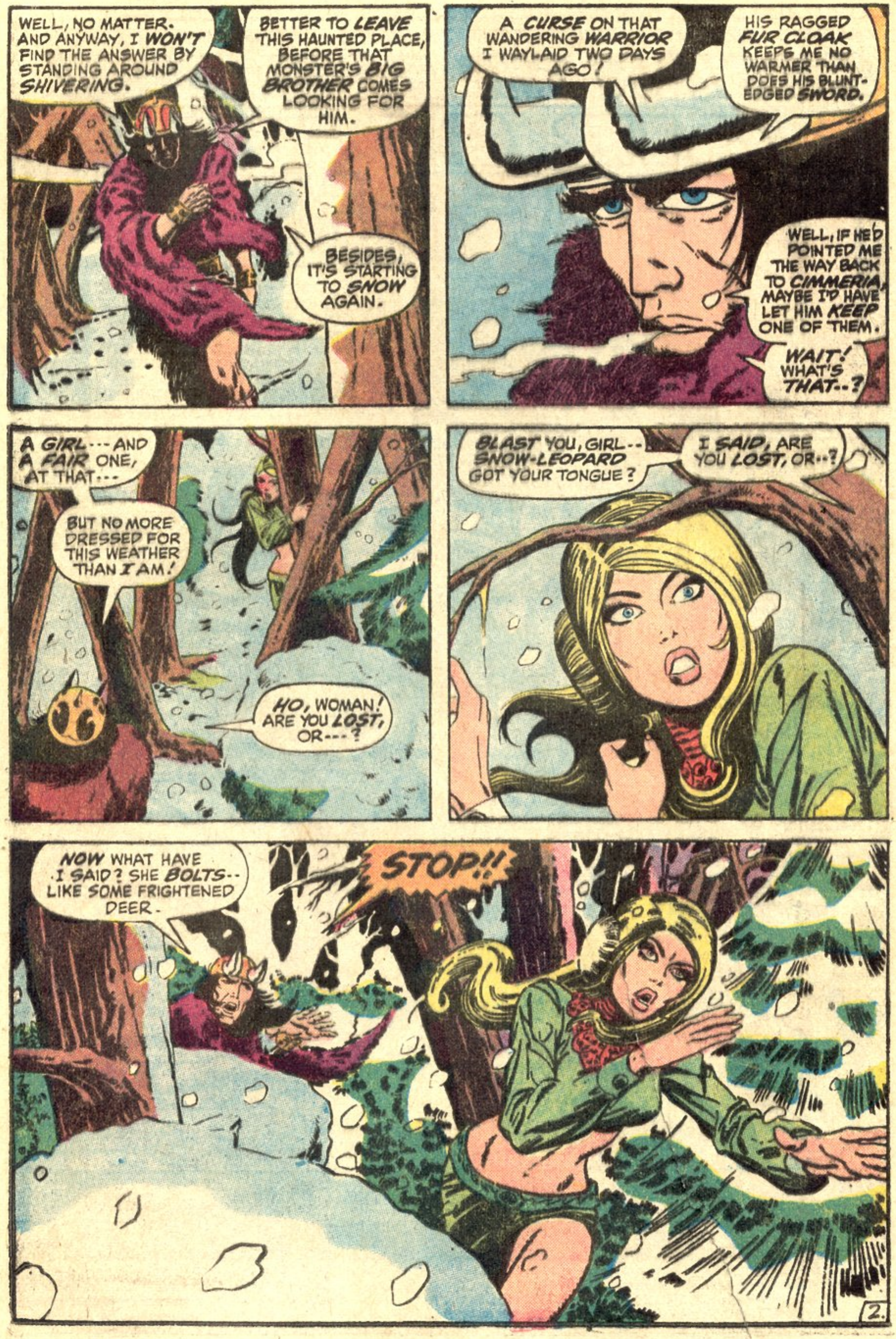
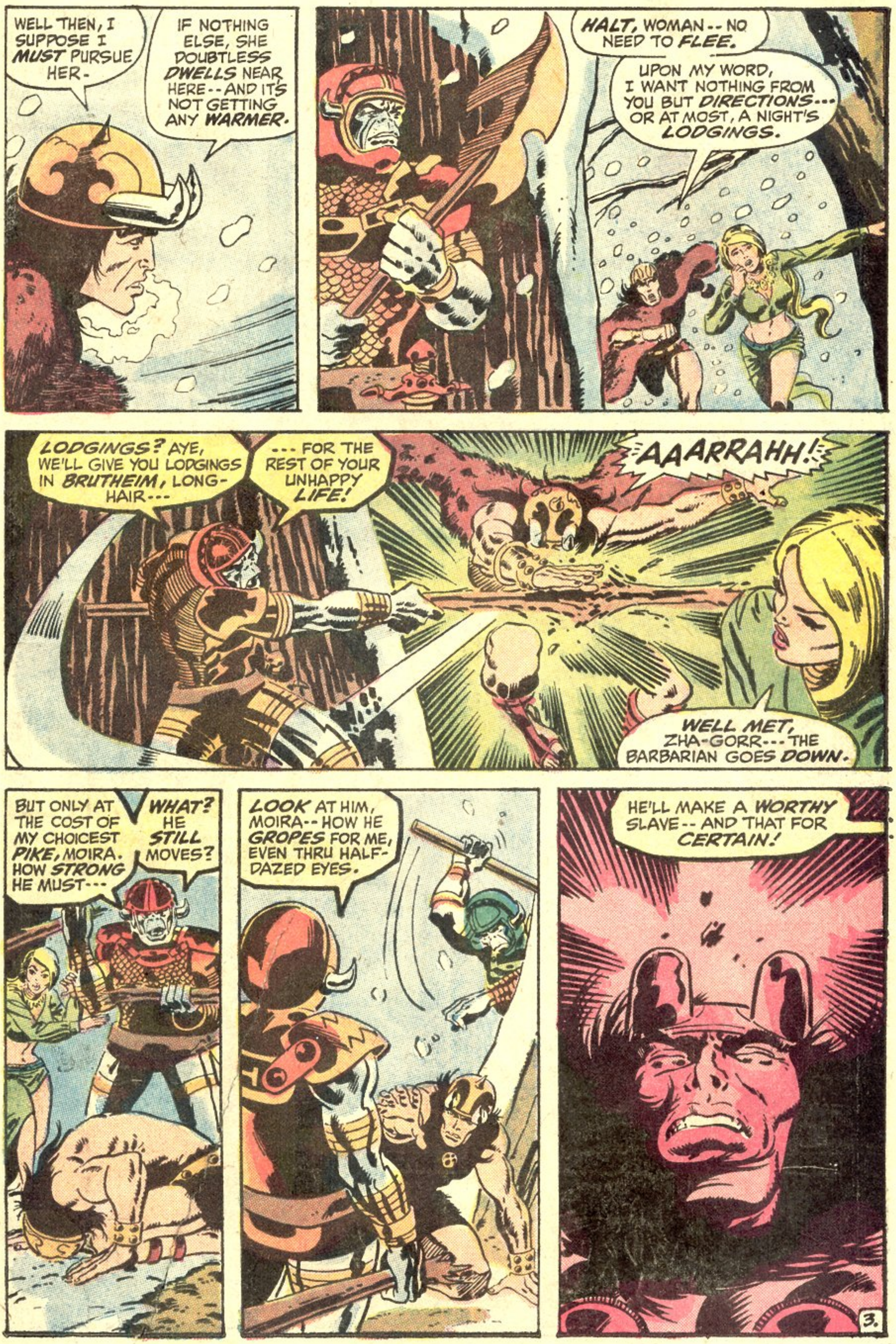
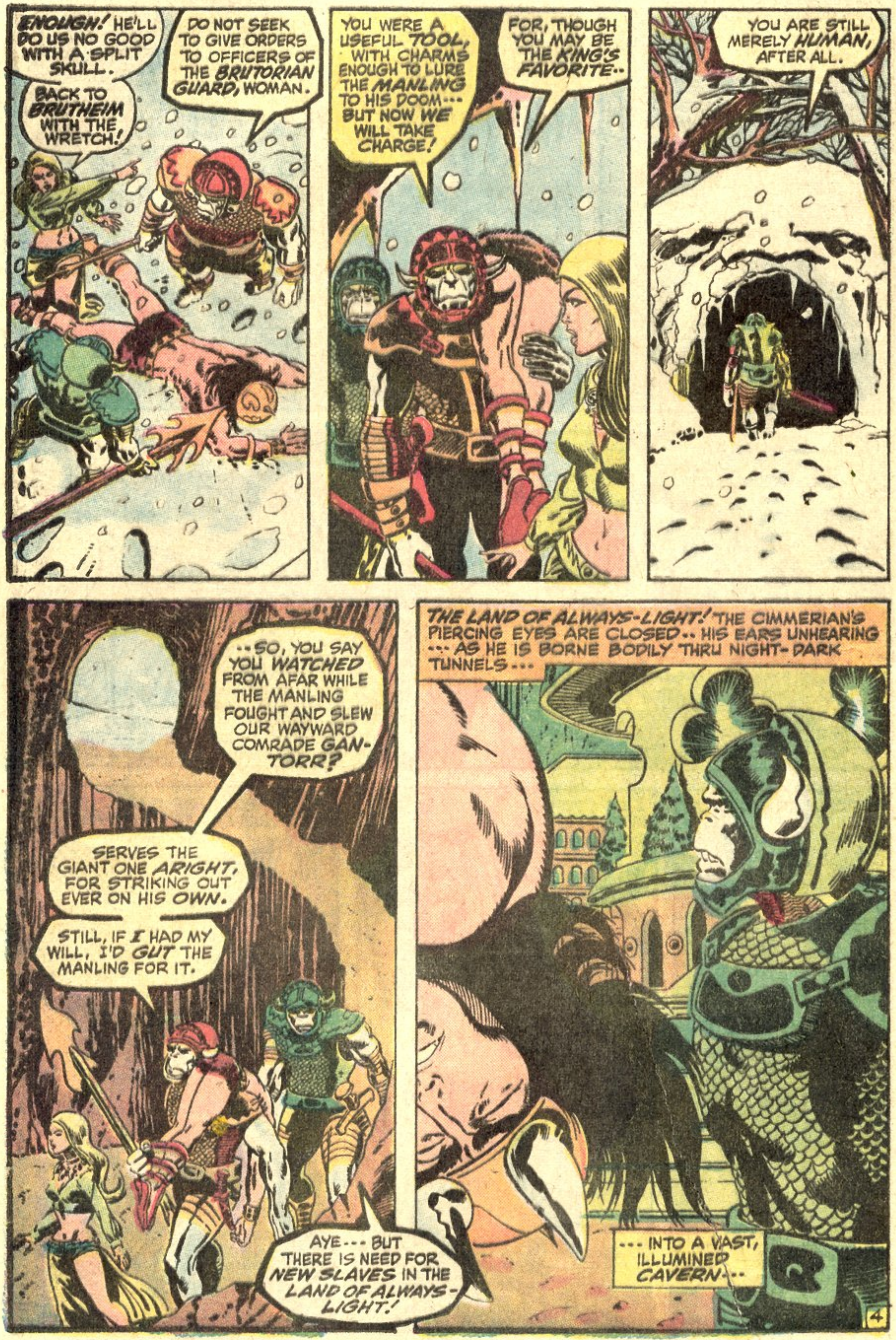
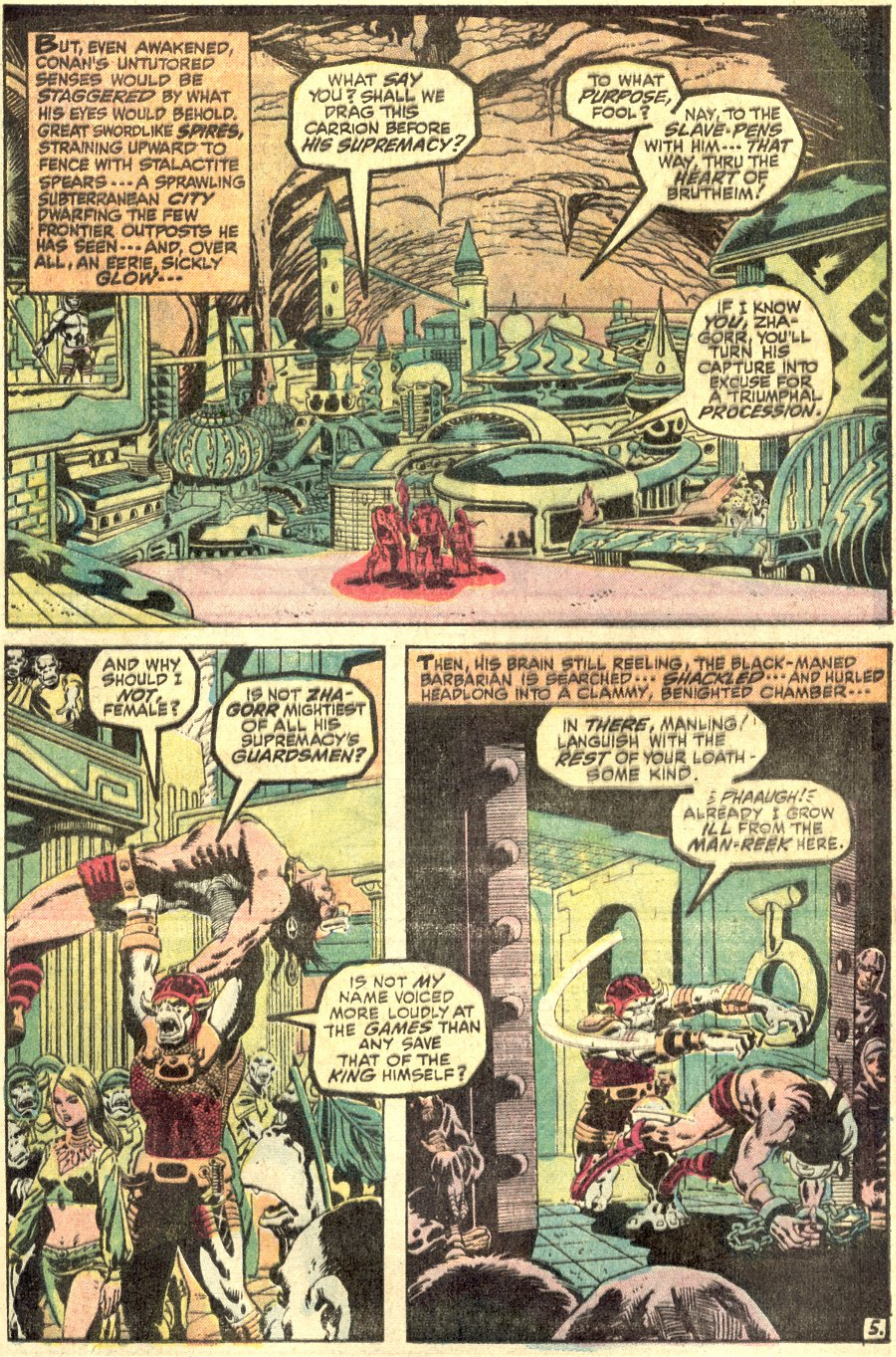
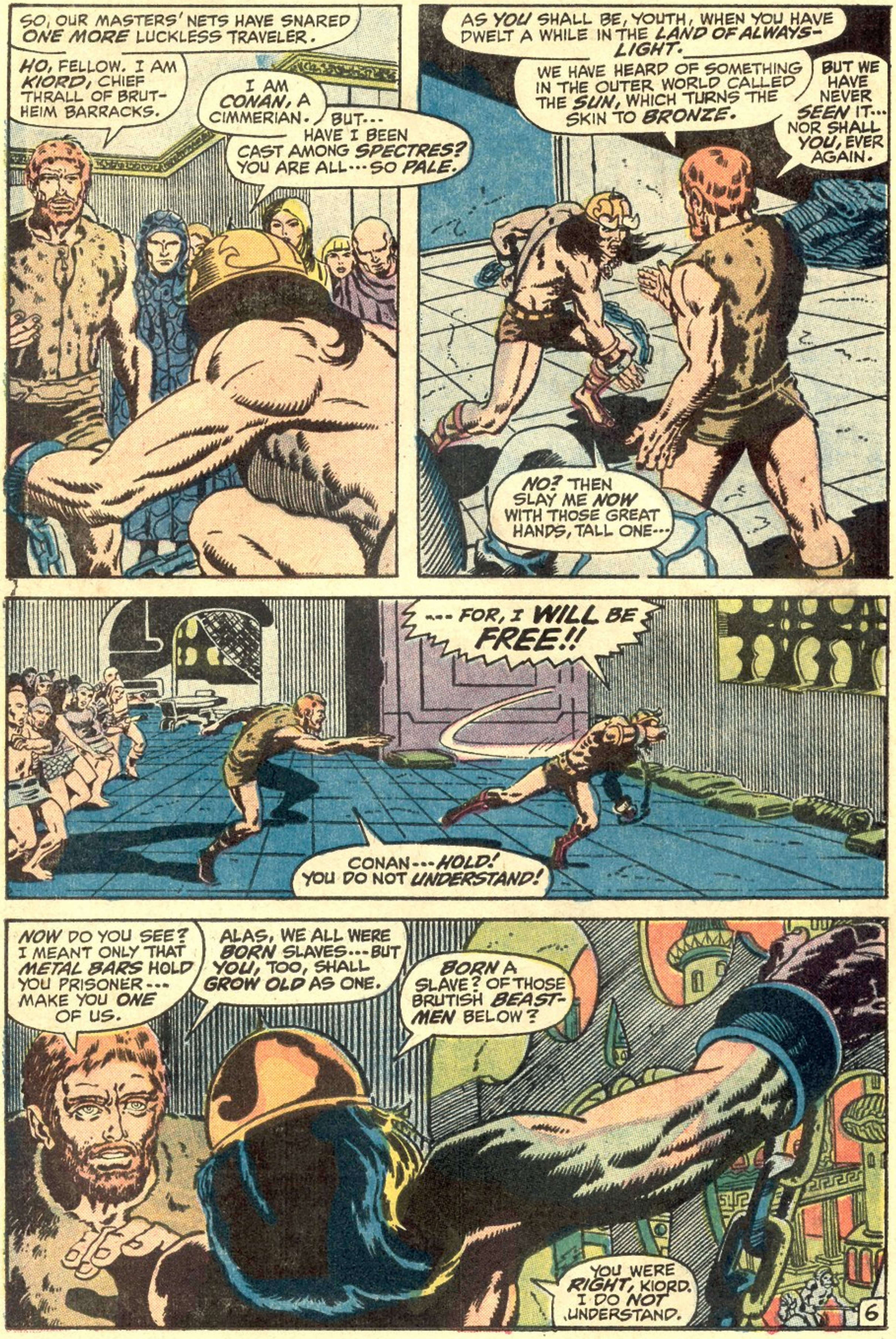
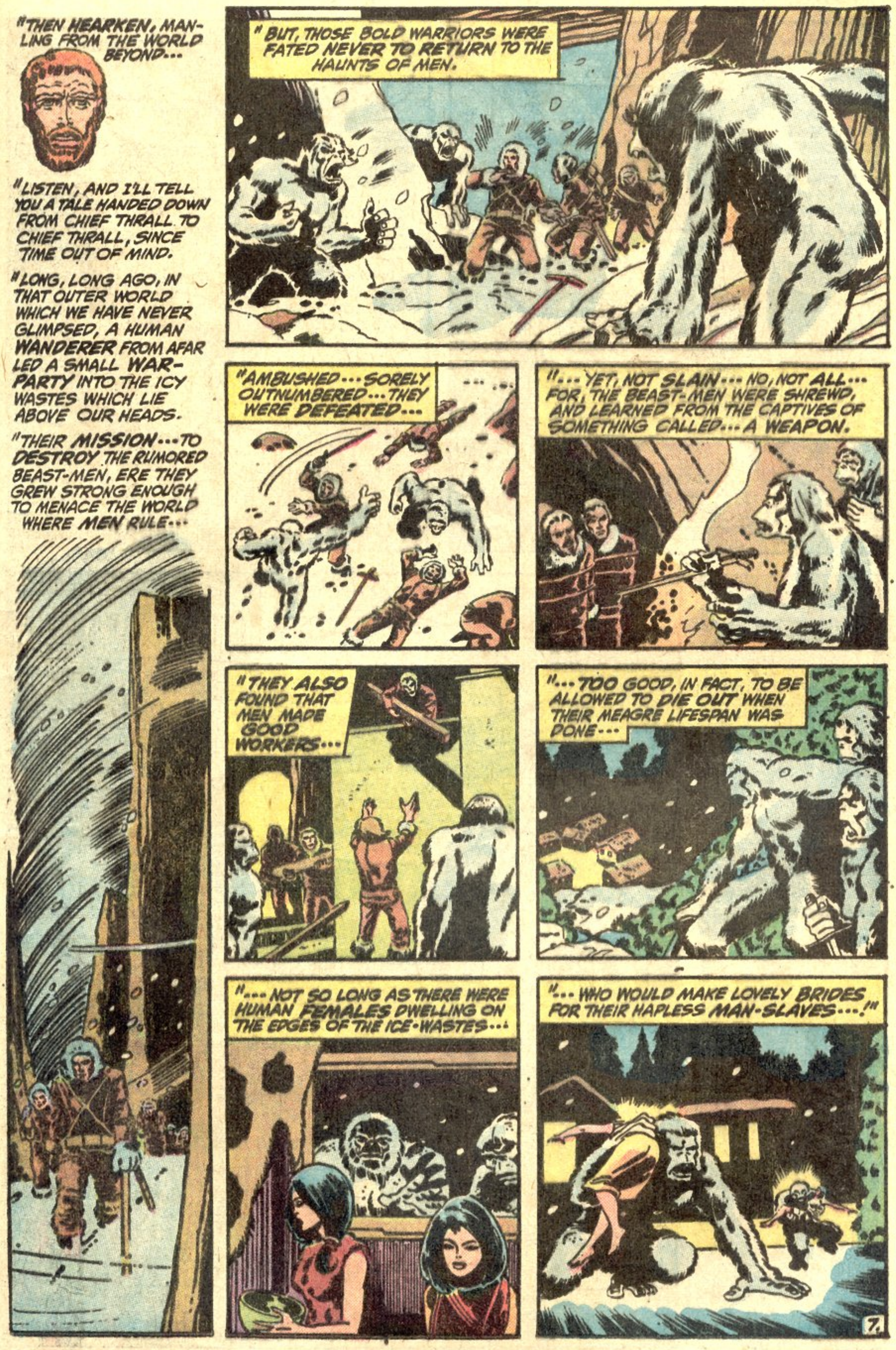

WELL, NO MATTER. AND ANYWAY, I WON'T FIND THE ANSWER BY STANDING AROUND SHIVERING.
BETTER TO LEAVE THIS HAUNTED PLACE, BEFORE THAT MONSTER'S BIG BROTHER COMES LOOKING FOR HIM.
BESIDES, IT'S STARTING TO SNOW AGAIN.
A CURSE ON THAT WANDERING WARRIOR I WAYLAID TWO DAYS AGO!
HIS RAGGED FUR CLOAK KEEPS ME NO WARMER THAN DOES HIS BLUNT-EDGED SWORD.
WELL, IF HE'D POINTED ME THE WAY BACK TO CIMMERIA, MAYBE I'D HAVE LET HIM KEEP ONE OF THEM.
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT--?
A GIRL--- AND A FAIR ONE, AT THAT---
BUT NO MORE DRESSED FOR THIS WEATHER THAN I AM!
HO, WOMAN! ARE YOU LOST, OR---?
BLAST YOU, GIRL-- SNOW-LEOPARD GOT YOUR TONGUE?
I SAID, ARE YOU LOST, OR--?
NOW WHAT HAVE I SAID? SHE BOLTS-- LIKE SOME FRIGHTENED DEER.
STOP!!

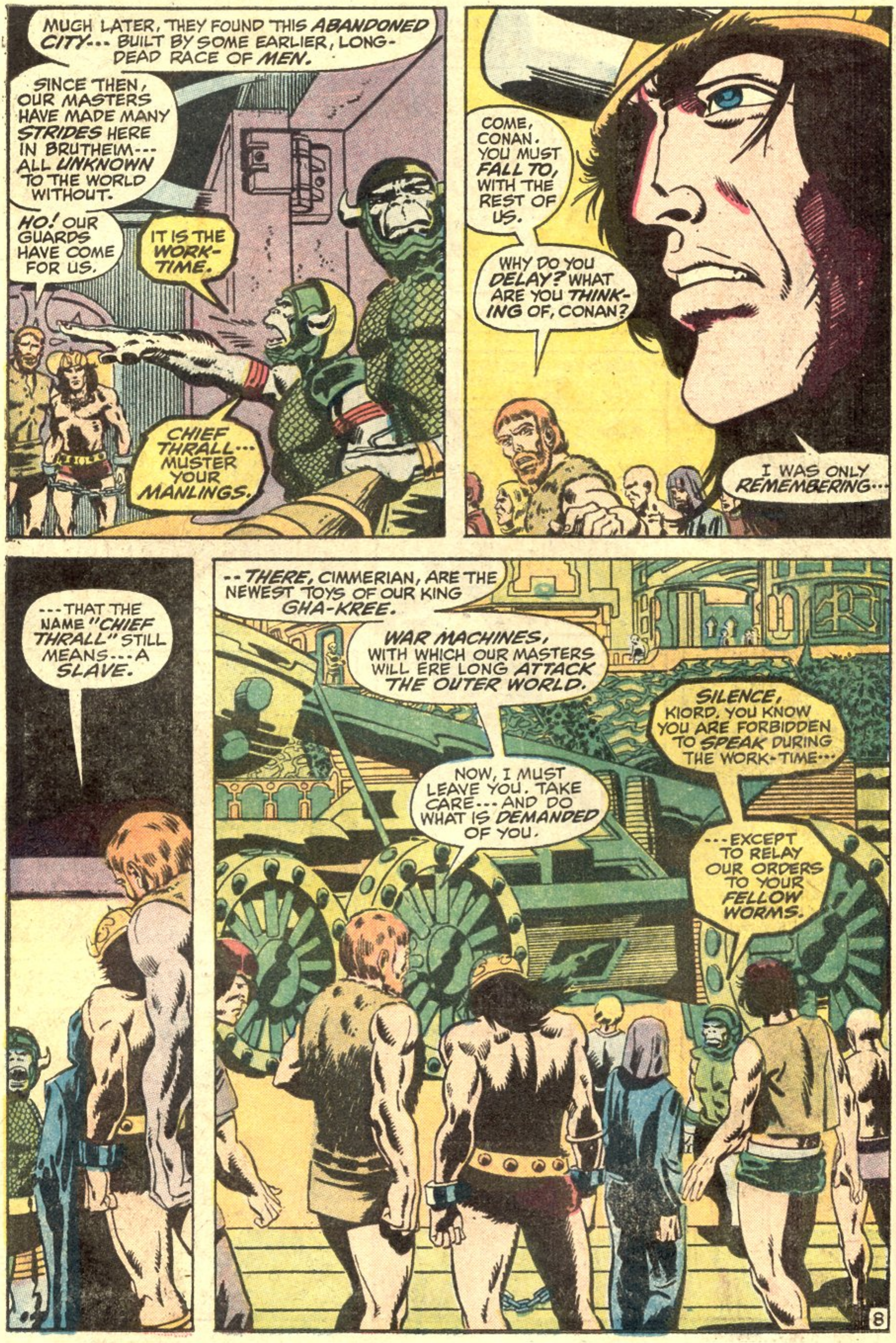

WELL THEN, I SUPPOSE I *MUST* PURSUE HER-
IF NOTHING ELSE, SHE DOUBTLESS *DWELLS* NEAR HERE--AND IT'S NOT GETTING ANY *WARMER*.
HALT, WOMAN--NO NEED TO *FLEE*.
UPON MY WORD, I WANT NOTHING FROM YOU BUT *DIRECTIONS*... OR AT MOST, A NIGHT'S *LODGINGS*.
LODGINGS? AYE, WE'LL GIVE YOU LODGINGS IN *BRUTHEIM*, LONG-HAIR---
---FOR THE REST OF YOUR UNHAPPY *LIFE!*
AAARRAHH!
WELL MET, ZHA-GORR---THE BARBARIAN GOES *DOWN*.
BUT ONLY AT THE COST OF MY CHOICEST *PIKE*, MOIRA. HOW *STRONG* HE MUST---
WHAT? HE *STILL* MOVES?
LOOK AT HIM, MOIRA--HOW HE *GROPES* FOR ME, EVEN THRU HALF-DAZED EYES.
HE'LL MAKE A *WORTHY* SLAVE--AND THAT FOR *CERTAIN!*

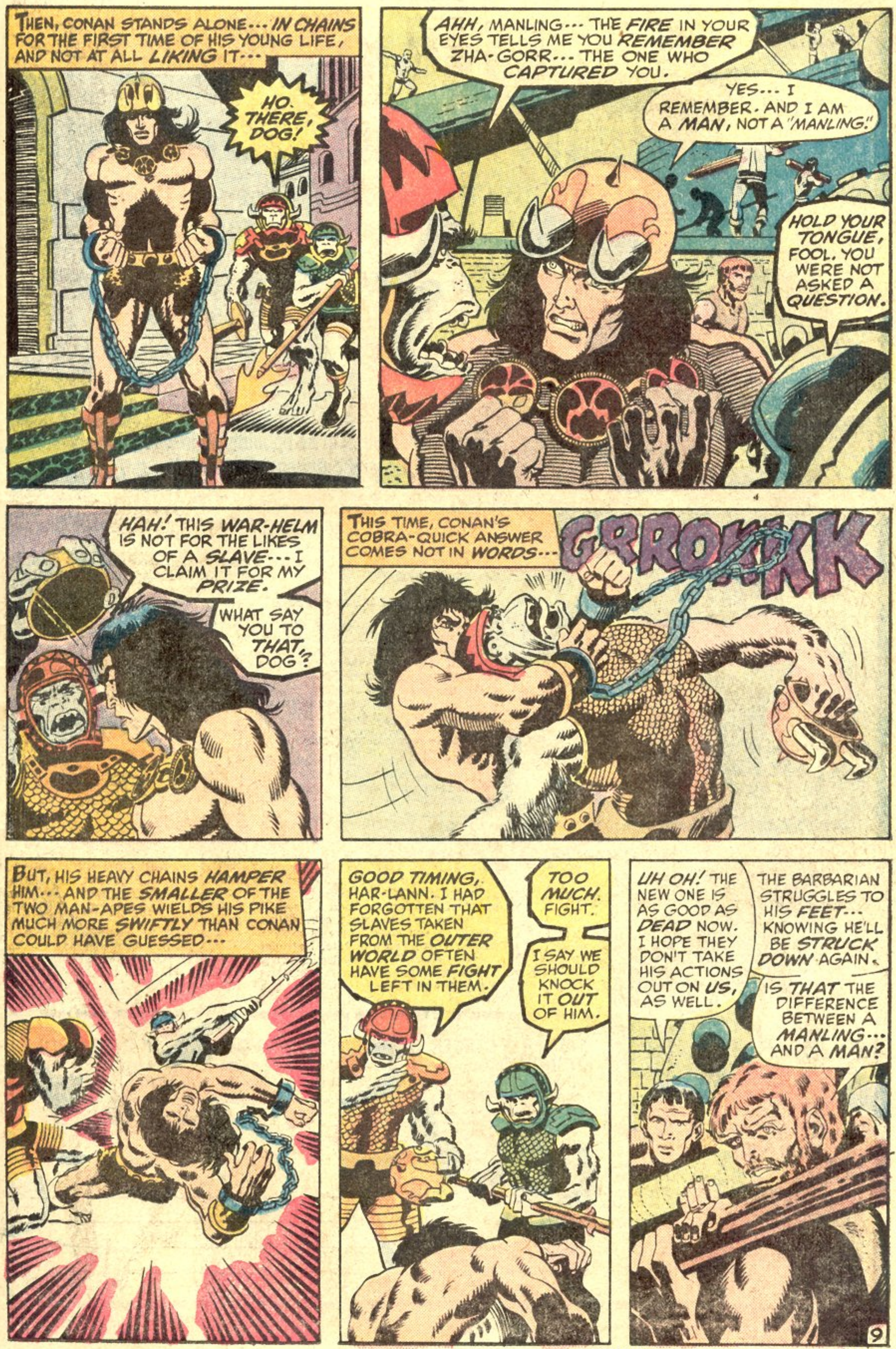

ENOUGH! HE'LL DO US NO GOOD WITH A SPLIT SKULL.
BACK TO BRUTHEIM WITH THE WRETCH!
DO NOT SEEK TO GIVE ORDERS TO OFFICERS OF THE BRUTORIAN GUARD, WOMAN.
YOU WERE A USEFUL TOOL, WITH CHARMS ENOUGH TO LURE THE MANLING TO HIS DOOM--- BUT NOW WE WILL TAKE CHARGE!
FOR, THOUGH YOU MAY BE THE KING'S FAVORITE--
YOU ARE STILL MERELY HUMAN, AFTER ALL.
--SO, YOU SAY YOU WATCHED FROM AFAR WHILE THE MANLING FOUGHT AND SLEW OUR WAYWARD COMRADE GANTORR?
SERVES THE GIANT ONE ARIGHT, FOR STRIKING OUT EVER ON HIS OWN.
STILL, IF I HAD MY WILL, I'D GUT THE MANLING FOR IT.
AYE--- BUT THERE IS NEED FOR NEW SLAVES IN THE LAND OF ALWAYS-LIGHT!
THE LAND OF ALWAYS-LIGHT! THE CIMMERIAN'S PIERCING EYES ARE CLOSED.. HIS EARS UNHEARING --- AS HE IS BORNE BODILY THRU NIGHT-DARK TUNNELS---
--- INTO A VAST, ILLUMINED CAVERN--


But, even awakened, Conan's untutored senses would be *staggered* by what his eyes would behold. Great swordlike *spires*, straining upward to fence with stalactite spears --- a sprawling subterranean *city* dwarfing the few frontier outposts he has seen --- and, over all, an eerie, sickly *glow* ---
What *say* you? Shall we drag this carrion before *his supremacy?*
To what *purpose*, fool?
Nay, to the *slave-pens* with him --- *that* way, thru the *heart* of Brutheim!
If I know *you*, Zhagorr, you'll turn his capture into excuse for a triumphal *procession*.
And why should I *not*, female?
Is not *Zhagorr* mightiest of all his supremacy's *guardsmen?*
Is not *my* name voiced more loudly at the *games* than any save that of the *king* himself?
Then, his brain still reeling, the black-maned barbarian is searched --- *shackled* --- and hurled headlong into a clammy, benighted chamber ---
In *there*, manling! Languish with the *rest* of your loathsome kind.
Phaaugh! Already I grow *ill* from the *man-reek* here.


SO, OUR MASTERS' NETS HAVE SNARED ONE MORE LUCKLESS TRAVELER.
HO, FELLOW. I AM KIORD, CHIEF THRALL OF BRUTHEIM BARRACKS.
I AM CONAN, A CIMMERIAN.
BUT--- HAVE I BEEN CAST AMONG SPECTRES? YOU ARE ALL--- SO PALE.
AS YOU SHALL BE, YOUTH, WHEN YOU HAVE DWELT A WHILE IN THE LAND OF ALWAYS-LIGHT.
WE HAVE HEARD OF SOMETHING IN THE OUTER WORLD CALLED THE SUN, WHICH TURNS THE SKIN TO BRONZE.
BUT WE HAVE NEVER SEEN IT... NOR SHALL YOU, EVER AGAIN.
NO? THEN SLAY ME NOW WITH THOSE GREAT HANDS, TALL ONE---
--- FOR, I WILL BE FREE!!
CONAN--- HOLD! YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
NOW DO YOU SEE? I MEANT ONLY THAT METAL BARS HOLD YOU PRISONER--- MAKE YOU ONE OF US.
ALAS, WE ALL WERE BORN SLAVES--- BUT YOU, TOO, SHALL GROW OLD AS ONE.
BORN A SLAVE? OF THOSE BRUTISH BEAST-MEN BELOW?
YOU WERE RIGHT, KIORD. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.


"THEN HEARKEN, MAN-LING FROM THE WORLD BEYOND...
"LISTEN, AND I'LL TELL YOU A TALE HANDED DOWN FROM CHIEF THRALL TO CHIEF THRALL, SINCE TIME OUT OF MIND.
"LONG, LONG AGO, IN THAT OUTER WORLD WHICH WE HAVE NEVER GLIMPSED, A HUMAN WANDERER FROM AFAR LED A SMALL WAR-PARTY INTO THE ICY WASTES WHICH LIE ABOVE OUR HEADS.
"THEIR MISSION...TO DESTROY THE RUMORED BEAST-MEN, ERE THEY GREW STRONG ENOUGH TO MENACE THE WORLD WHERE MEN RULE...
"BUT, THOSE BOLD WARRIORS WERE FATED NEVER TO RETURN TO THE HAUNTS OF MEN.
"AMBUSHED...SORELY OUTNUMBERED...THEY WERE DEFEATED...
"...YET, NOT SLAIN...NO, NOT ALL...FOR, THE BEAST-MEN WERE SHREWD, AND LEARNED FROM THE CAPTIVES OF SOMETHING CALLED...A WEAPON.
"THEY ALSO FOUND THAT MEN MADE GOOD WORKERS...
"...TOO GOOD, IN FACT, TO BE ALLOWED TO DIE OUT WHEN THEIR MEAGRE LIFESPAN WAS DONE...
"...NOT SO LONG AS THERE WERE HUMAN FEMALES DWELLING ON THE EDGES OF THE ICE-WASTES...
"...WHO WOULD MAKE LOVELY BRIDES FOR THEIR HAPLESS MAN-SLAVES...!"


MUCH LATER, THEY FOUND THIS *ABANDONED CITY*--- BUILT BY SOME EARLIER, LONG-DEAD RACE OF *MEN.*
SINCE THEN, OUR MASTERS HAVE MADE MANY *STRIDES* HERE IN BRUTHEIM--- ALL *UNKNOWN* TO THE WORLD WITHOUT.
HO! OUR GUARDS HAVE COME FOR US.
IT IS THE *WORK-TIME.*
CHIEF THRALL--- MUSTER YOUR *MANLINGS.*
COME, CONAN. YOU MUST *FALL TO,* WITH THE REST OF US.
WHY DO YOU *DELAY?* WHAT ARE YOU *THINKING* OF, CONAN?
I WAS ONLY *REMEMBERING*---
---THAT THE NAME *"CHIEF THRALL"* STILL MEANS--- A *SLAVE.*
--*THERE,* CIMMERIAN, ARE THE NEWEST TOYS OF OUR KING *GHA-KREE.*
WAR MACHINES, WITH WHICH OUR MASTERS WILL ERE LONG *ATTACK THE OUTER WORLD.*
NOW, I MUST LEAVE YOU. TAKE CARE--- AND DO WHAT IS *DEMANDED* OF YOU.
SILENCE, KIORD. YOU KNOW YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO *SPEAK* DURING THE WORK-TIME---
---EXCEPT TO RELAY OUR ORDERS TO YOUR *FELLOW WORMS.*


THEN, CONAN STANDS ALONE... IN CHAINS FOR THE FIRST TIME OF HIS YOUNG LIFE, AND NOT AT ALL LIKING IT...
HO. THERE, DOG!
AHH, MANLING... THE FIRE IN YOUR EYES TELLS ME YOU REMEMBER ZHA-GORR... THE ONE WHO CAPTURED YOU.
YES... I REMEMBER. AND I AM A MAN, NOT A "MANLING."
HOLD YOUR TONGUE, FOOL. YOU WERE NOT ASKED A QUESTION.
HAH! THIS WAR-HELM IS NOT FOR THE LIKES OF A SLAVE... I CLAIM IT FOR MY PRIZE.
WHAT SAY YOU TO THAT, DOG?
THIS TIME, CONAN'S COBRA-QUICK ANSWER COMES NOT IN WORDS...
GRRONKK
BUT, HIS HEAVY CHAINS HAMPER HIM... AND THE SMALLER OF THE TWO MAN-APES WIELDS HIS PIKE MUCH MORE SWIFTLY THAN CONAN COULD HAVE GUESSED...
GOOD TIMING, HAR-LANN. I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT SLAVES TAKEN FROM THE OUTER WORLD OFTEN HAVE SOME FIGHT LEFT IN THEM.
TOO MUCH. FIGHT.
I SAY WE SHOULD KNOCK IT OUT OF HIM.
UH OH! THE NEW ONE IS AS GOOD AS DEAD NOW. I HOPE THEY DON'T TAKE HIS ACTIONS OUT ON US, AS WELL.
THE BARBARIAN STRUGGLES TO HIS FEET... KNOWING HE'LL BE STRUCK DOWN AGAIN.
IS THAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MANLING... AND A MAN?

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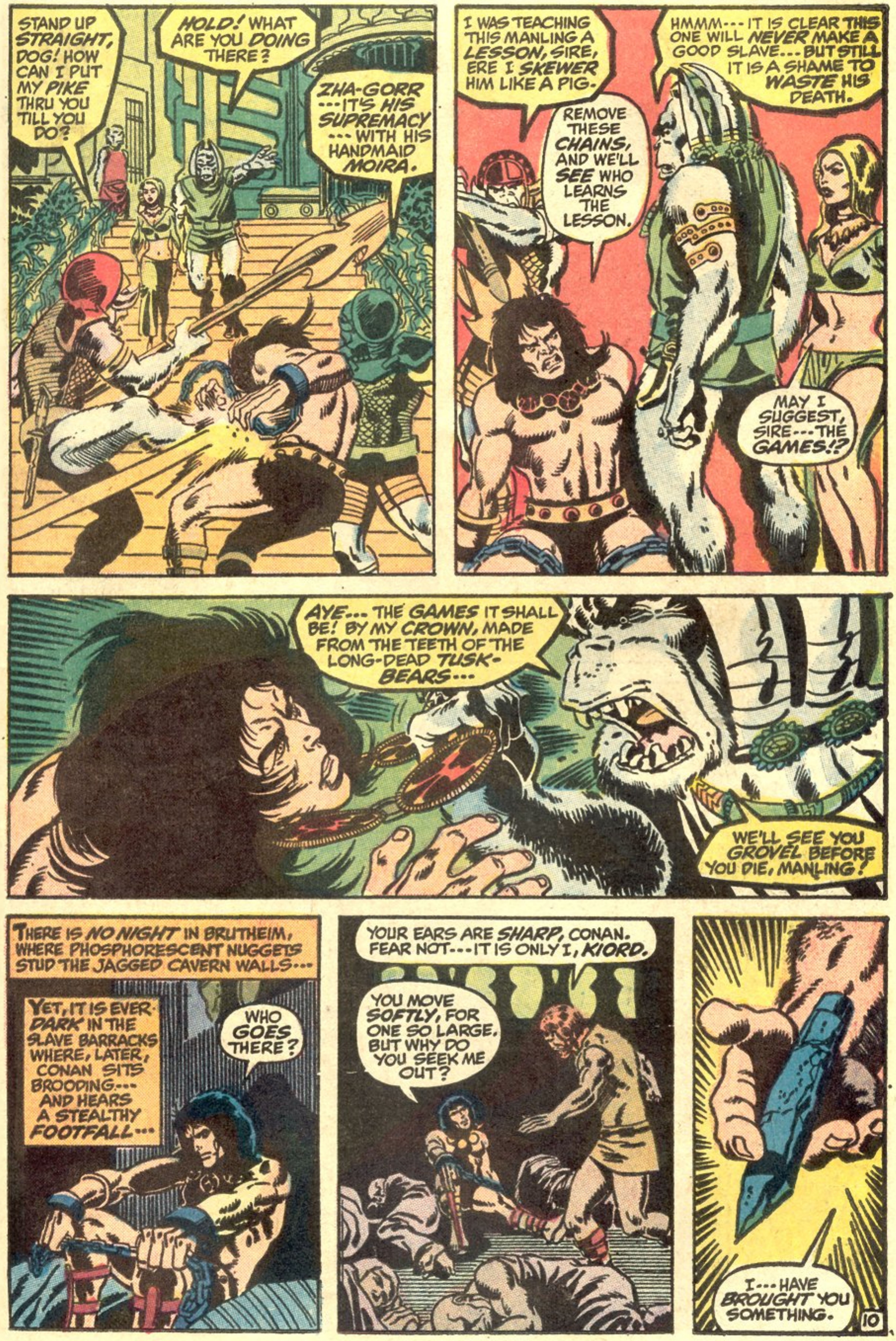
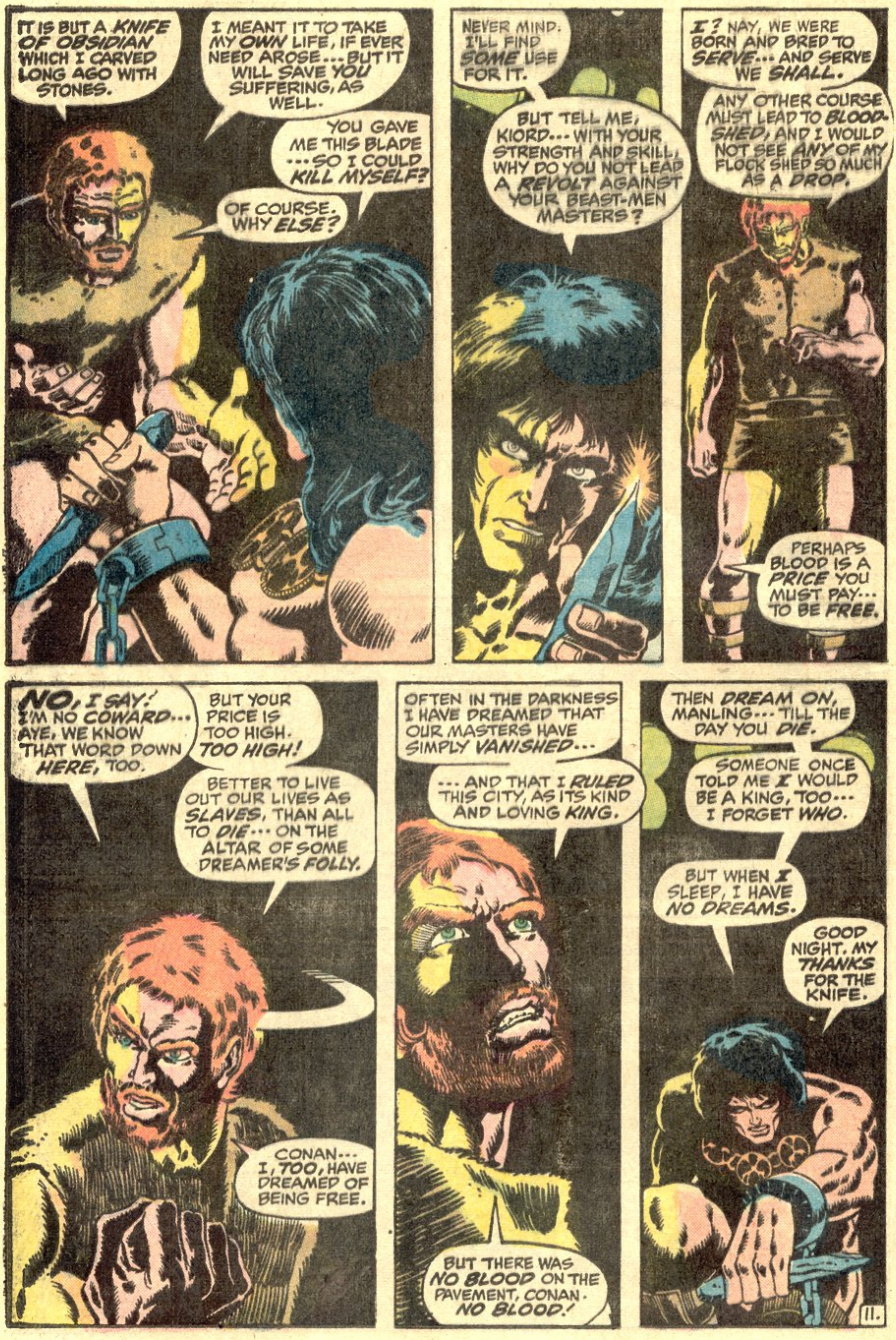
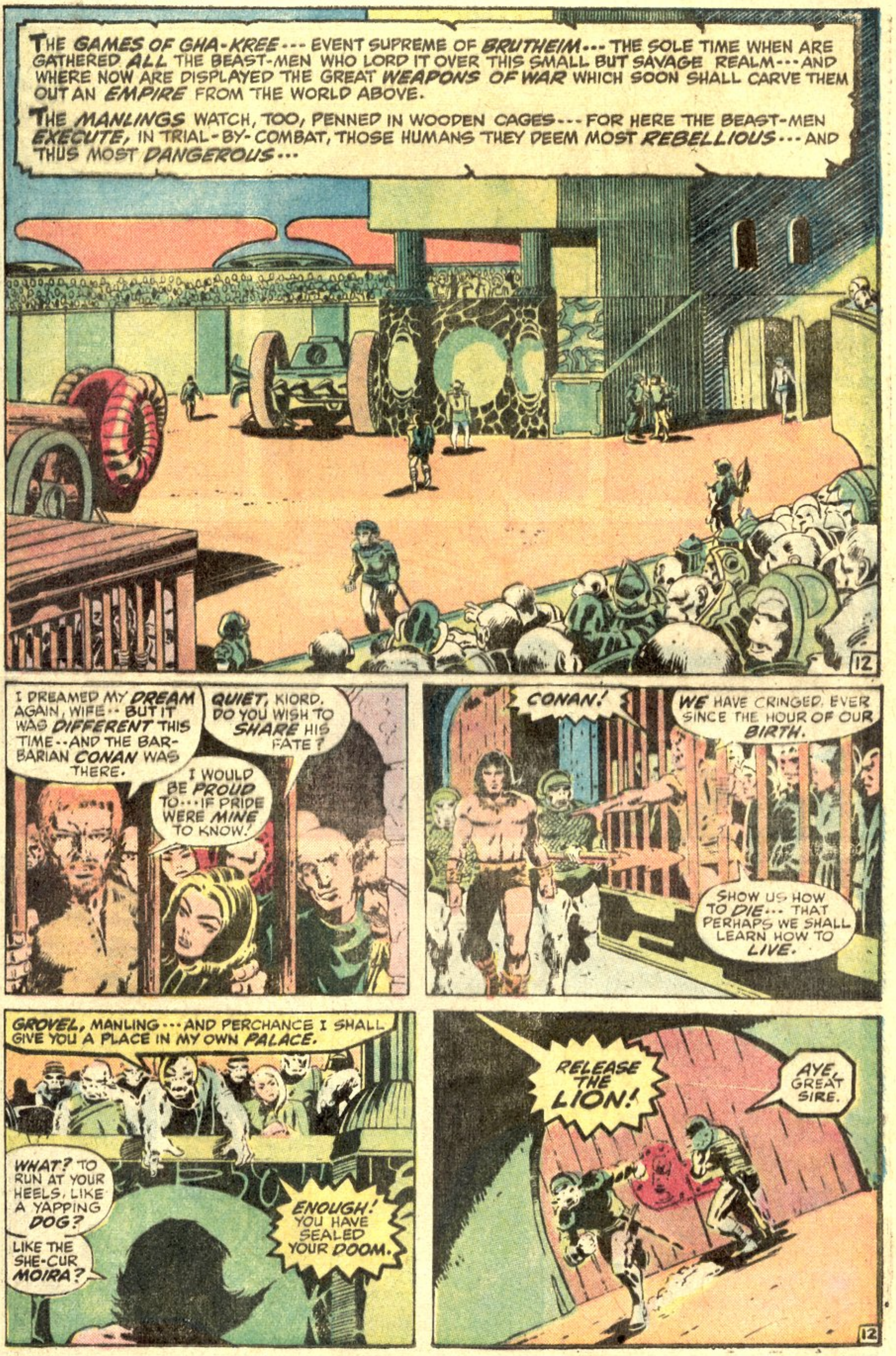
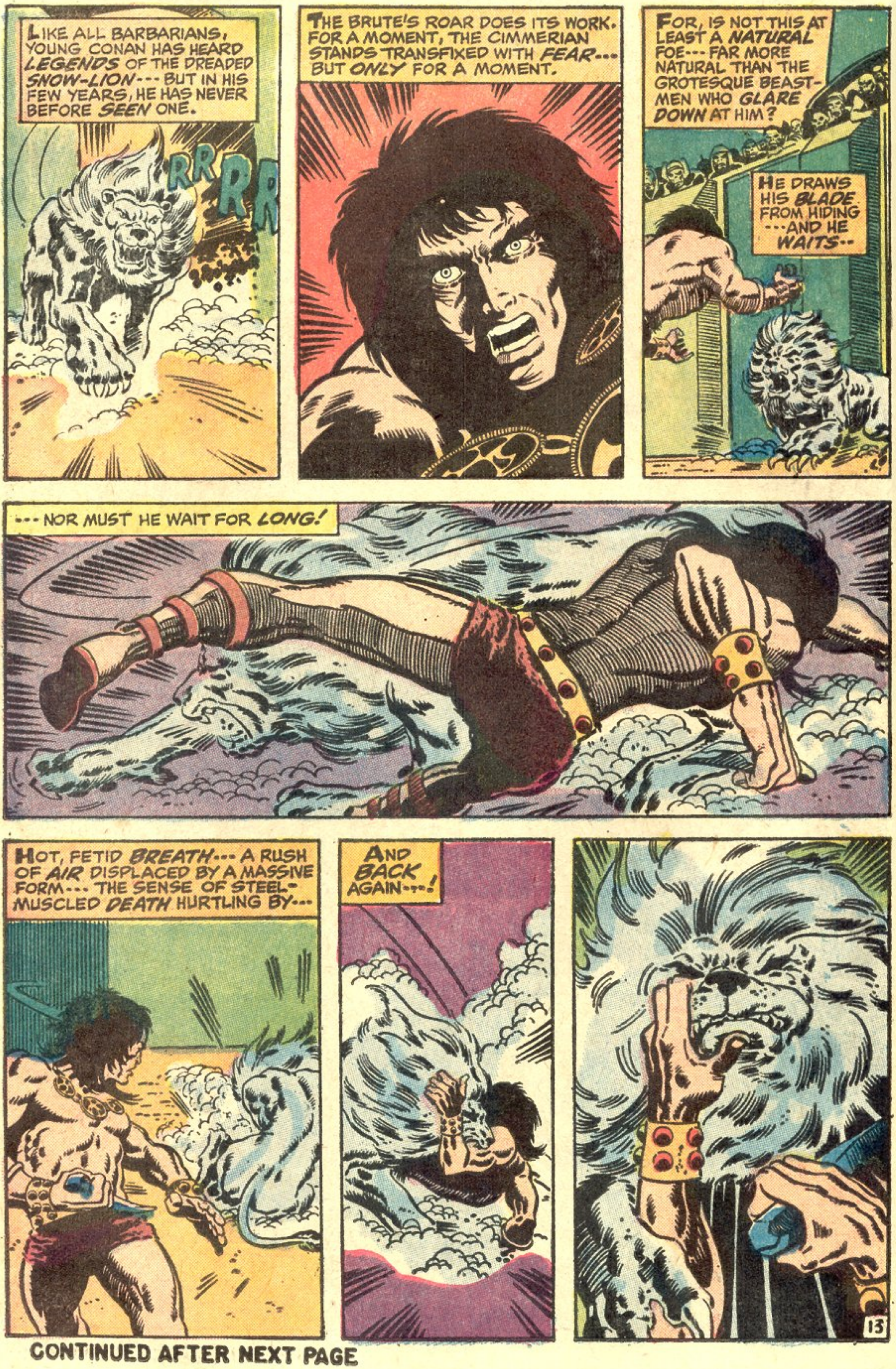

STAND UP STRAIGHT, DOG! HOW CAN I PUT MY PIKE THRU YOU TILL YOU DO?
HOLD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
ZHA-GORR---IT'S HIS SUPREMACY---WITH HIS HANDMAID MOIRA.
I WAS TEACHING THIS MANLING A LESSON, SIRE, ERE I SKEWER HIM LIKE A PIG.
REMOVE THESE CHAINS, AND WE'LL SEE WHO LEARNS THE LESSON.
HMMM--- IT IS CLEAR THIS ONE WILL NEVER MAKE A GOOD SLAVE... BUT STILL IT IS A SHAME TO WASTE HIS DEATH.
MAY I SUGGEST, SIRE---THE GAMES!?
AYE... THE GAMES IT SHALL BE! BY MY CROWN, MADE FROM THE TEETH OF THE LONG-DEAD TUSK-BEARS...
WE'LL SEE YOU GROVEL BEFORE YOU DIE, MANLING!
THERE IS NO NIGHT IN BRUTHEIM, WHERE PHOSPHORESCENT NUGGETS STUD THE JAGGED CAVERN WALLS...
YET, IT IS EVER DARK IN THE SLAVE BARRACKS WHERE, LATER, CONAN SITS BROODING--- AND HEARS A STEALTHY FOOTFALL...
WHO GOES THERE?
YOUR EARS ARE SHARP, CONAN. FEAR NOT---IT IS ONLY I, KIORD.
YOU MOVE SOFTLY, FOR ONE SO LARGE. BUT WHY DO YOU SEEK ME OUT?
I---HAVE BROUGHT YOU SOMETHING.


IT IS BUT A KNIFE OF OBSIDIAN WHICH I CARVED LONG AGO WITH STONES.
I MEANT IT TO TAKE MY OWN LIFE, IF EVER NEED AROSE... BUT IT WILL SAVE YOU SUFFERING, AS WELL.
YOU GAVE ME THIS BLADE ...SO I COULD KILL MYSELF?
OF COURSE. WHY ELSE?
NEVER MIND. I'LL FIND SOME USE FOR IT.
BUT TELL ME, KIORD... WITH YOUR STRENGTH AND SKILL, WHY DO YOU NOT LEAD A REVOLT AGAINST YOUR BEAST-MEN MASTERS?
I? NAY, WE WERE BORN AND BRED TO SERVE... AND SERVE WE SHALL.
ANY OTHER COURSE MUST LEAD TO BLOODSHED, AND I WOULD NOT SEE ANY OF MY FLOCK SHED SO MUCH AS A DROP.
PERHAPS BLOOD IS A PRICE YOU MUST PAY... TO BE FREE.
NO, I SAY! I'M NO COWARD... AYE, WE KNOW THAT WORD DOWN HERE, TOO.
BUT YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH. TOO HIGH!
BETTER TO LIVE OUT OUR LIVES AS SLAVES, THAN ALL TO DIE... ON THE ALTAR OF SOME DREAMER'S FOLLY.
CONAN... I, TOO, HAVE DREAMED OF BEING FREE.
OFTEN IN THE DARKNESS I HAVE DREAMED THAT OUR MASTERS HAVE SIMPLY VANISHED...
...AND THAT I RULED THIS CITY, AS ITS KIND AND LOVING KING.
BUT THERE WAS NO BLOOD ON THE PAVEMENT, CONAN. NO BLOOD!
THEN DREAM ON, MANLING... TILL THE DAY YOU DIE.
SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME I WOULD BE A KING, TOO... I FORGET WHO.
BUT WHEN I SLEEP, I HAVE NO DREAMS.
GOOD NIGHT. MY THANKS FOR THE KNIFE.


THE GAMES OF GHA-KREE --- EVENT SUPREME OF BRUTHEIM --- THE SOLE TIME WHEN ARE GATHERED ALL THE BEAST-MEN WHO LORD IT OVER THIS SMALL BUT SAVAGE REALM --- AND WHERE NOW ARE DISPLAYED THE GREAT WEAPONS OF WAR WHICH SOON SHALL CARVE THEM OUT AN EMPIRE FROM THE WORLD ABOVE.
THE MANLINGS WATCH, TOO, PENNED IN WOODEN CAGES --- FOR HERE THE BEAST-MEN EXECUTE, IN TRIAL-BY-COMBAT, THOSE HUMANS THEY DEEM MOST REBELLIOUS --- AND THUS MOST DANGEROUS ---
12
I DREAMED MY DREAM AGAIN, WIFE -- BUT IT WAS DIFFERENT THIS TIME -- AND THE BARBARIAN CONAN WAS THERE.
QUIET, KIORD. DO YOU WISH TO SHARE HIS FATE?
I WOULD BE PROUD TO --- IF PRIDE WERE MINE TO KNOW!
CONAN!
WE HAVE CRINGED, EVER SINCE THE HOUR OF OUR BIRTH.
SHOW US HOW TO DIE --- THAT PERHAPS WE SHALL LEARN HOW TO LIVE.
GROVEL, MANLING --- AND PERCHANCE I SHALL GIVE YOU A PLACE IN MY OWN PALACE.
WHAT? TO RUN AT YOUR HEELS, LIKE A YAPPING DOG?
LIKE THE SHE-CUR MOIRA?
ENOUGH! YOU HAVE SEALED YOUR DOOM.
RELEASE THE LION!
AYE, GREAT SIRE.
12


LIKE ALL BARBARIANS, YOUNG CONAN HAS HEARD *LEGENDS* OF THE DREADED *SNOW-LION*--- BUT IN HIS FEW YEARS, HE HAS NEVER BEFORE *SEEN* ONE.
RRRR
THE BRUTE'S ROAR DOES ITS WORK. FOR A MOMENT, THE CIMMERIAN STANDS TRANSFIXED WITH *FEAR*... BUT *ONLY* FOR A MOMENT.
FOR, IS NOT THIS AT LEAST A *NATURAL* FOE--- FAR MORE NATURAL THAN THE GROTESQUE BEAST-MEN WHO *GLARE DOWN* AT HIM?
HE DRAWS HIS *BLADE* FROM HIDING ---AND HE *WAITS*--
--- NOR MUST HE WAIT FOR *LONG!*
HOT, FETID *BREATH*--- A RUSH OF *AIR* DISPLACED BY A MASSIVE FORM--- THE SENSE OF STEEL-MUSCLED *DEATH* HURTLING BY---
AND *BACK* AGAIN---!
13

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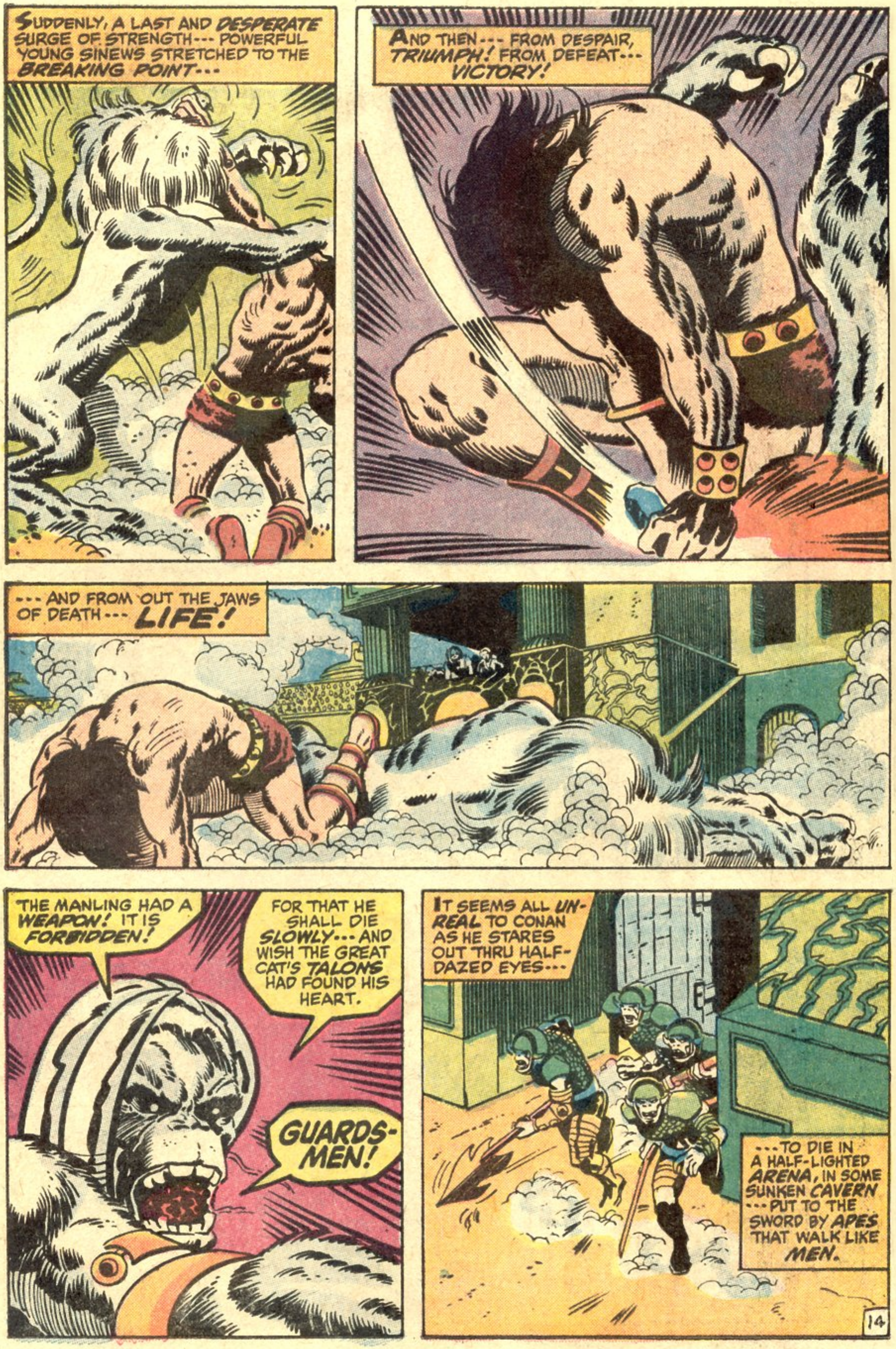
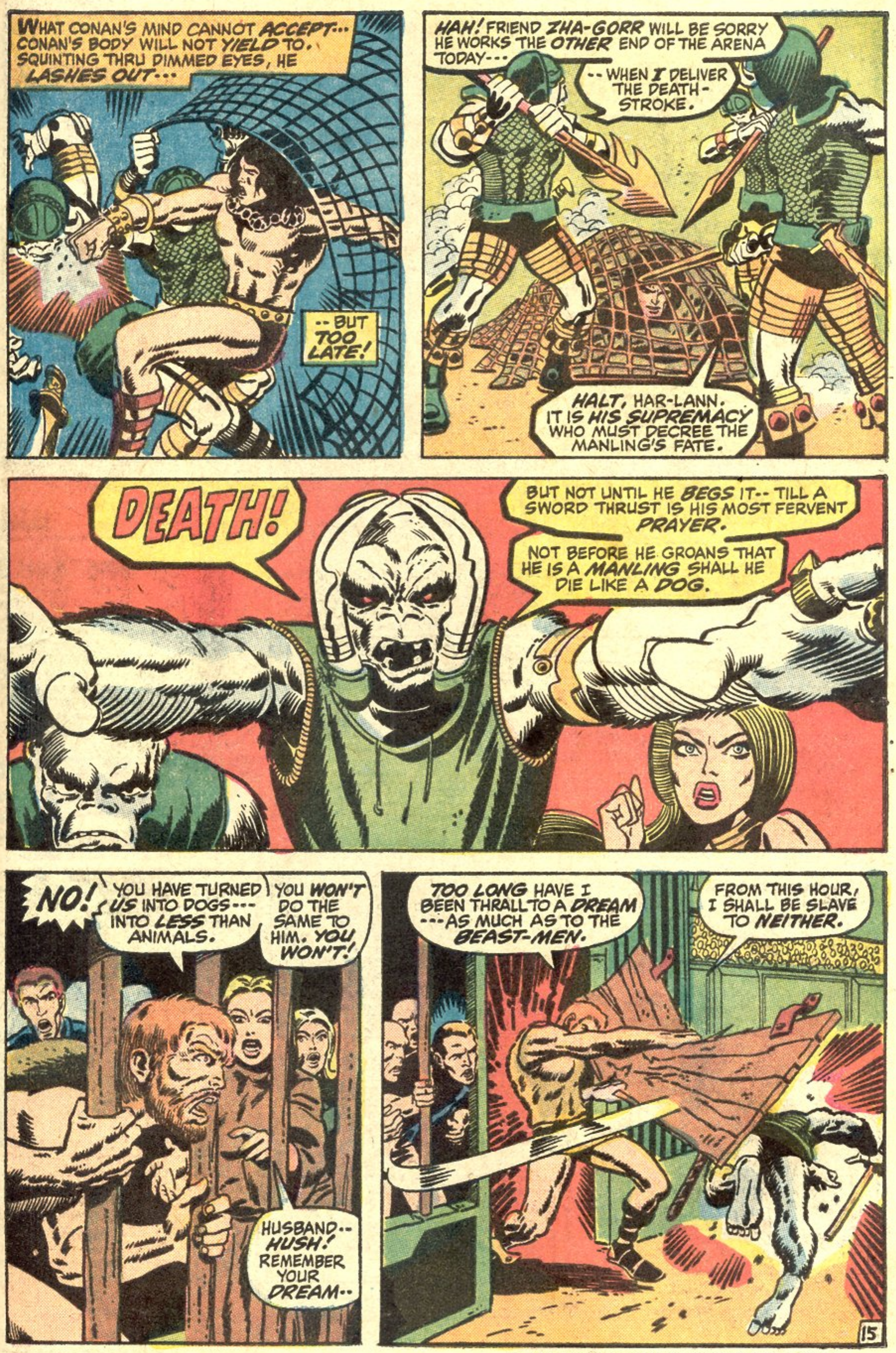

SUDDENLY, A LAST AND DESPERATE SURGE OF STRENGTH--- POWERFUL YOUNG SINEWS STRETCHED TO THE BREAKING POINT---
AND THEN--- FROM DESPAIR, TRIUMPH! FROM DEFEAT--- VICTORY!
--- AND FROM OUT THE JAWS OF DEATH--- LIFE!
THE MANLING HAD A WEAPON! IT IS FORBIDDEN!
FOR THAT HE SHALL DIE SLOWLY--- AND WISH THE GREAT CAT'S TALONS HAD FOUND HIS HEART.
GUARDSMEN!
IT SEEMS ALL UNREAL TO CONAN AS HE STARES OUT THRU HALF-DAZED EYES---
---TO DIE IN A HALF-LIGHTED ARENA, IN SOME SUNKEN CAVERN ---PUT TO THE SWORD BY APES THAT WALK LIKE MEN.


WHAT CONAN'S MIND CANNOT ACCEPT... CONAN'S BODY WILL NOT YIELD TO. SQUINTING THRU DIMMED EYES, HE LASHES OUT...
--BUT TOO LATE!
HAH! FRIEND ZHA-GORR WILL BE SORRY HE WORKS THE OTHER END OF THE ARENA TODAY---
--WHEN I DELIVER THE DEATH-STROKE.
HALT, HAR-LANN. IT IS HIS SUPREMACY WHO MUST DECREE THE MANLING'S FATE.
DEATH!
BUT NOT UNTIL HE BEGS IT-- TILL A SWORD THRUST IS HIS MOST FERVENT PRAYER.
NOT BEFORE HE GROANS THAT HE IS A MANLING SHALL HE DIE LIKE A DOG.
NO!
YOU HAVE TURNED US INTO DOGS--- INTO LESS THAN ANIMALS.
YOU WON'T DO THE SAME TO HIM. YOU WON'T!
HUSBAND-- HUSH! REMEMBER YOUR DREAM--
TOO LONG HAVE I BEEN THRALL TO A DREAM ---AS MUCH AS TO THE BEAST-MEN.
FROM THIS HOUR, I SHALL BE SLAVE TO NEITHER.

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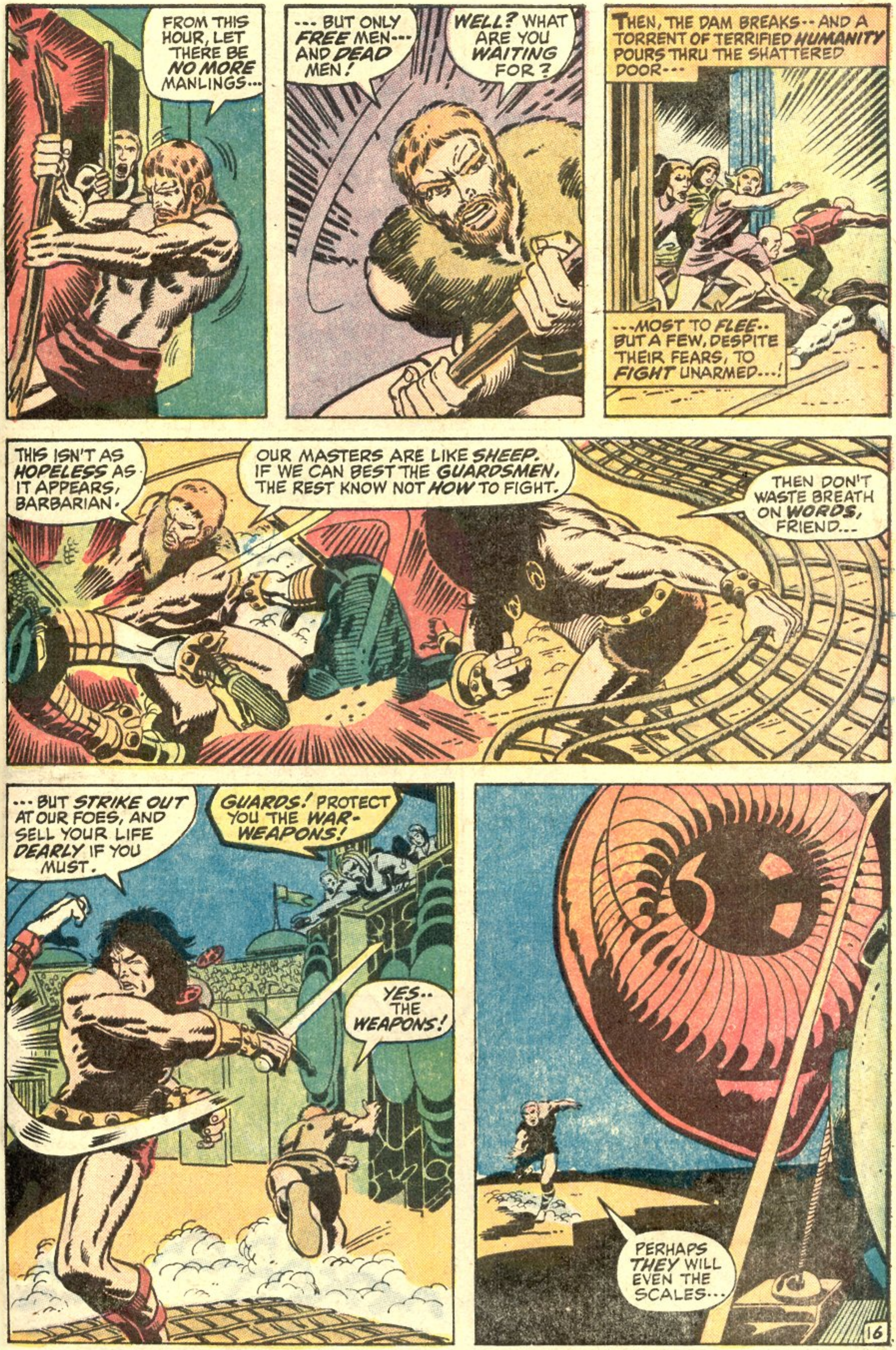
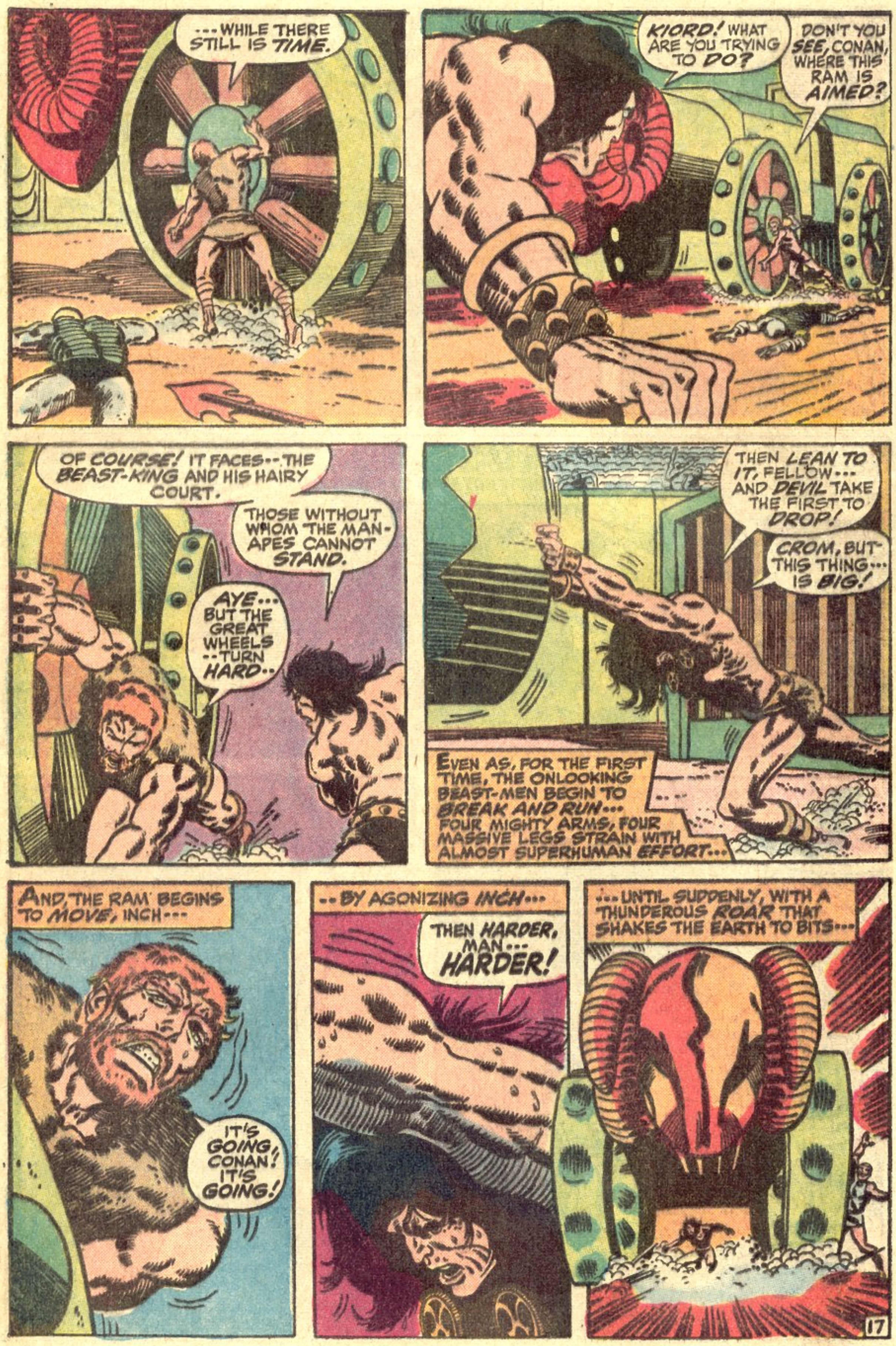
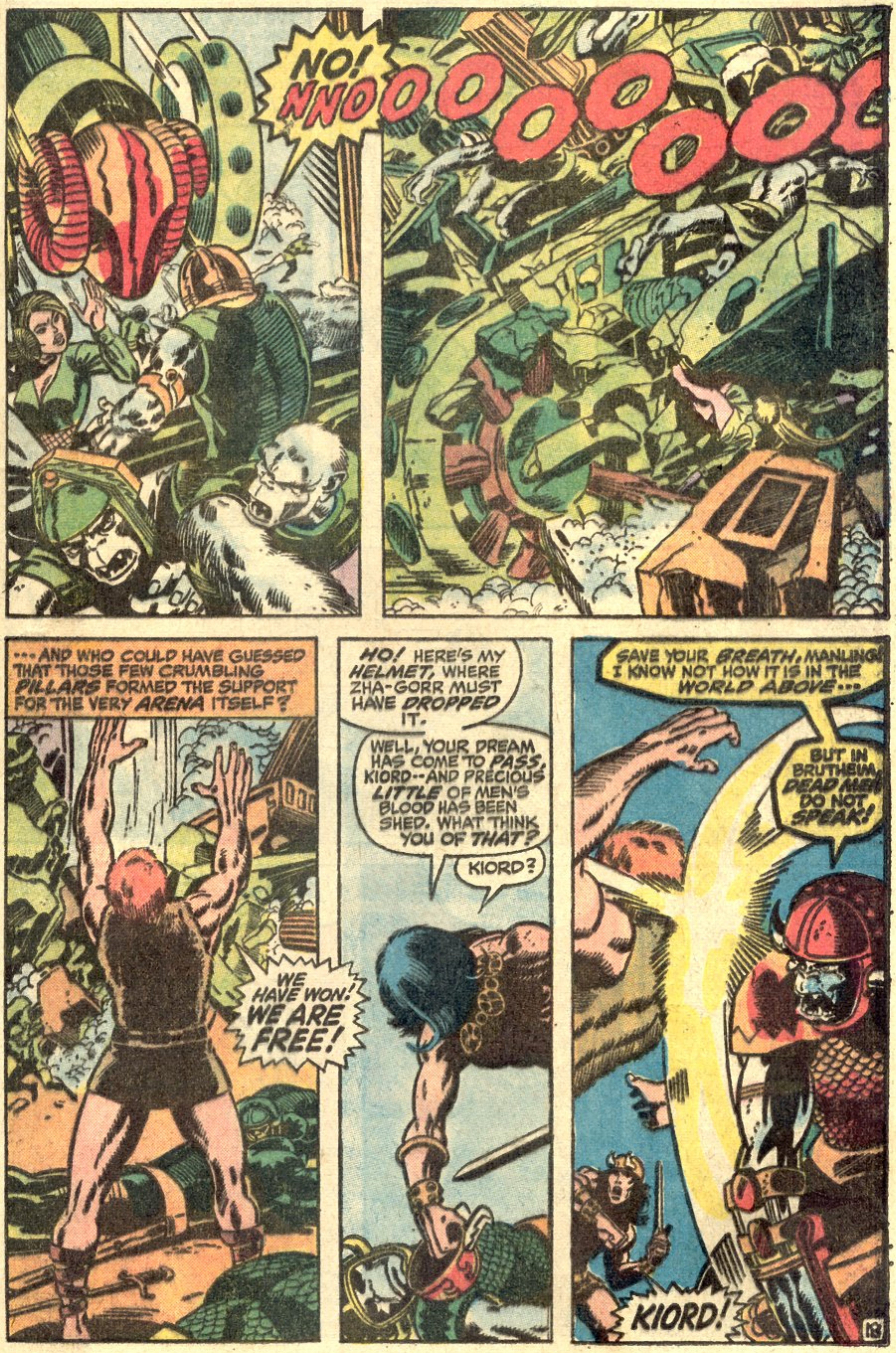
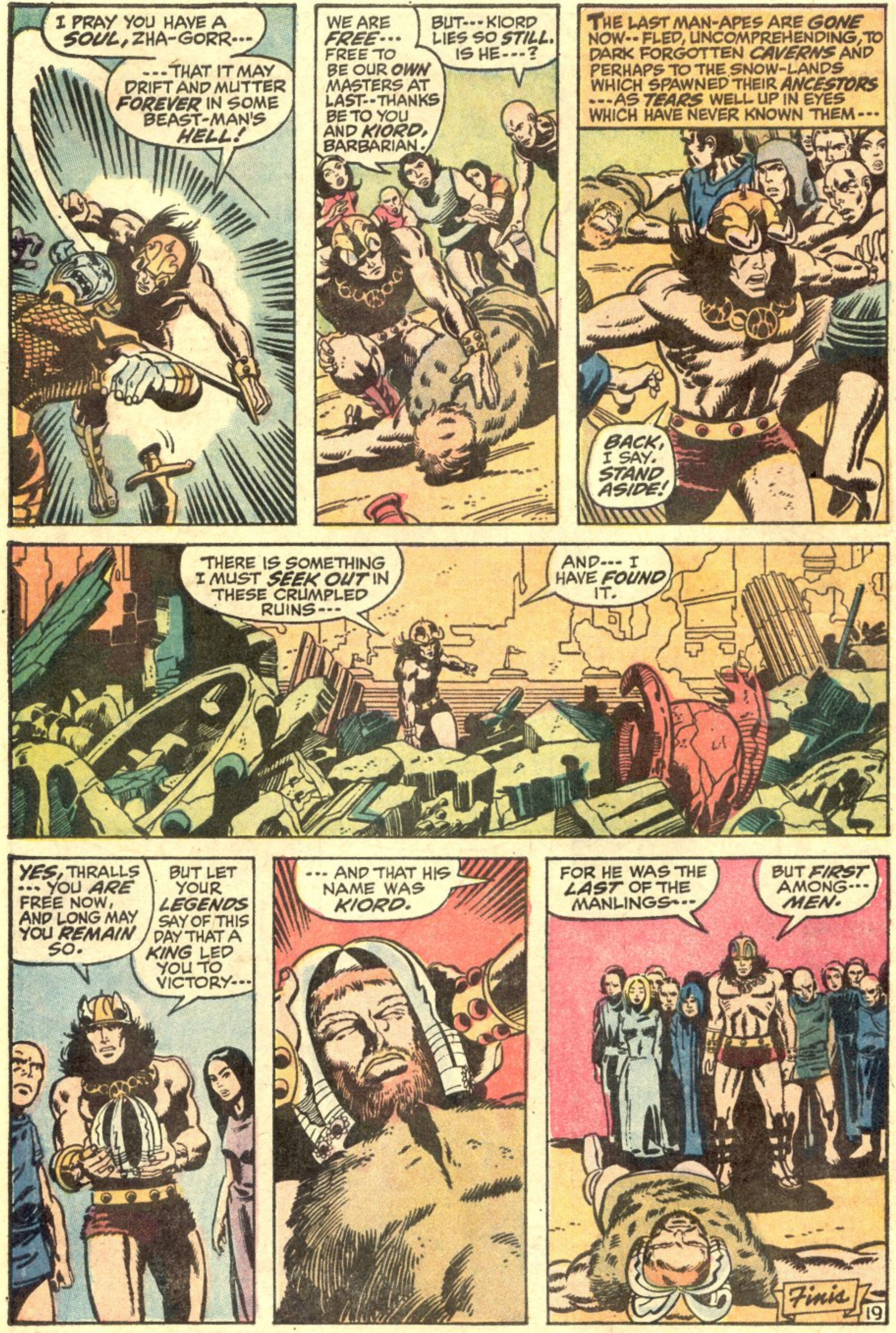

FROM THIS HOUR, LET THERE BE *NO MORE* MANLINGS...
--- BUT ONLY *FREE* MEN--- AND *DEAD* MEN!
WELL? WHAT ARE YOU *WAITING* FOR?
THEN, THE DAM BREAKS-- AND A TORRENT OF TERRIFIED *HUMANITY* POURS THRU THE SHATTERED DOOR---
---MOST TO *FLEE*.. BUT A FEW, DESPITE THEIR FEARS, TO *FIGHT* UNARMED---!
THIS ISN'T AS *HOPELESS* AS IT APPEARS, BARBARIAN.
OUR MASTERS ARE LIKE *SHEEP*. IF WE CAN BEST THE *GUARDSMEN*, THE REST KNOW NOT *HOW* TO FIGHT.
THEN DON'T WASTE BREATH ON *WORDS*, FRIEND...
--- BUT *STRIKE OUT* AT OUR FOES, AND SELL YOUR LIFE *DEARLY* IF YOU MUST.
GUARDS! PROTECT YOU THE *WAR-WEAPONS!*
YES.. THE WEAPONS!
PERHAPS *THEY* WILL EVEN THE SCALES...


...WHILE THERE STILL IS *TIME.*
KIORD! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO *DO?*
DON'T YOU *SEE,* CONAN, WHERE THIS RAM IS *AIMED?*
OF *COURSE!* IT FACES--THE *BEAST-KING* AND HIS HAIRY COURT.
THOSE WITHOUT WHOM THE MAN-APES CANNOT *STAND.*
AYE... BUT THE GREAT WHEELS --TURN *HARD..*
THEN *LEAN TO IT,* FELLOW... AND *DEVIL* TAKE THE FIRST TO *DROP!*
CROM, BUT THIS THING... IS *BIG!*
EVEN AS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE ONLOOKING BEAST-MEN BEGIN TO *BREAK AND RUN...* FOUR MIGHTY ARMS, FOUR MASSIVE LEGS STRAIN WITH ALMOST SUPERHUMAN *EFFORT...*
AND THE RAM BEGINS TO *MOVE,* INCH...
IT'S *GOING,* CONAN! IT'S *GOING!*
--BY AGONIZING *INCH...*
THEN *HARDER,* MAN... *HARDER!*
...UNTIL SUDDENLY, WITH A THUNDEROUS *ROAR* THAT SHAKES THE EARTH TO BITS...


NO! NNOOOOOOOOO
...AND WHO COULD HAVE GUESSED THAT THOSE FEW CRUMBLING PILLARS FORMED THE SUPPORT FOR THE VERY ARENA ITSELF?
WE HAVE WON! WE ARE FREE!
HO! HERE'S MY HELMET, WHERE ZHA-GORR MUST HAVE DROPPED IT.
WELL, YOUR DREAM HAS COME TO PASS, KIORD--AND PRECIOUS LITTLE OF MEN'S BLOOD HAS BEEN SHED. WHAT THINK YOU OF THAT?
KIORD?
SAVE YOUR BREATH, MANLING! I KNOW NOT HOW IT IS IN THE WORLD ABOVE...
BUT IN BRUTHEIM, DEAD MEN DO NOT SPEAK!
KIORD!


I PRAY YOU HAVE A **SOUL**, ZHA-GORR---
---THAT IT MAY DRIFT AND MUTTER **FOREVER** IN SOME BEAST-MAN'S **HELL!**
WE ARE **FREE**--- FREE TO BE OUR **OWN** MASTERS AT LAST--THANKS BE TO YOU AND **KIORD**, BARBARIAN.
BUT---KIORD LIES SO **STILL**. IS HE---?
THE LAST MAN-APES ARE **GONE** NOW--FLED, UNCOMPREHENDING, TO DARK FORGOTTEN **CAVERNS** AND PERHAPS TO THE SNOW-LANDS WHICH SPAWNED THEIR **ANCESTORS** ---AS **TEARS** WELL UP IN EYES WHICH HAVE NEVER KNOWN THEM---
BACK, I SAY. **STAND ASIDE!**
THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST **SEEK OUT** IN THESE CRUMPLED RUINS---
AND--- I HAVE **FOUND** IT.
YES, THRALLS --- YOU **ARE** FREE NOW, AND LONG MAY YOU **REMAIN** SO.
BUT LET YOUR **LEGENDS** SAY OF THIS DAY THAT A **KING** LED YOU TO VICTORY---
--- AND THAT HIS NAME WAS **KIORD.**
FOR HE WAS THE **LAST** OF THE MANLINGS---
BUT **FIRST** AMONG--- **MEN.**
Finis

THE HYBORIAN PAGE

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

AND THE WINNER IS. . .!

How familiar these words, for many years now, to the followers of film, who have watched (though with increasingly un-bated breath) their favorite stars tear clumsily at sealed envelopes which have previously been kept under lock and key at Price-Waterhouse (or are they stored in a mayonnaise jar on Funk and Wagnall's porch? One forgets).

And of late, virtually every other entertainment medium has jumped into the awards spotlight—TV's Emmies, Broadway's once-furtively-dispensed Tonys, the record industry's Grammies, etc.

Maybe it was inevitable, then, that—since the comic-book fans of the U.S. had been giving out their own awards ever since the early 1960's—sooner or later the comic-mag industry would get around to doing the same. But it had to wait until the formation of the Academy of Comic Book Arts in 1970-71 to do so.

By the time you read these immortal words, the *third* annual awards (for calendar year 1972) will have been given out—but since ACBA holds its awards banquet in May, only the *nominations* for last year are known at this time.

But, in these three years, few comics have been honored by so many nominations and awards (called Shazams) as has Marvel's own CONAN THE BARBARIAN. Here's a brief listing of the awards for which CONAN has been nominated to date:

In 1970, with only two issues published, CONAN was nominated as Best Feature. Ish #2, "The Lair of the Beast-Men," was nominated as Best Story, Roy Thomas as Best Writer (Dramatic Division). And young Barry Smith won hands down as Best New Talent of the year.

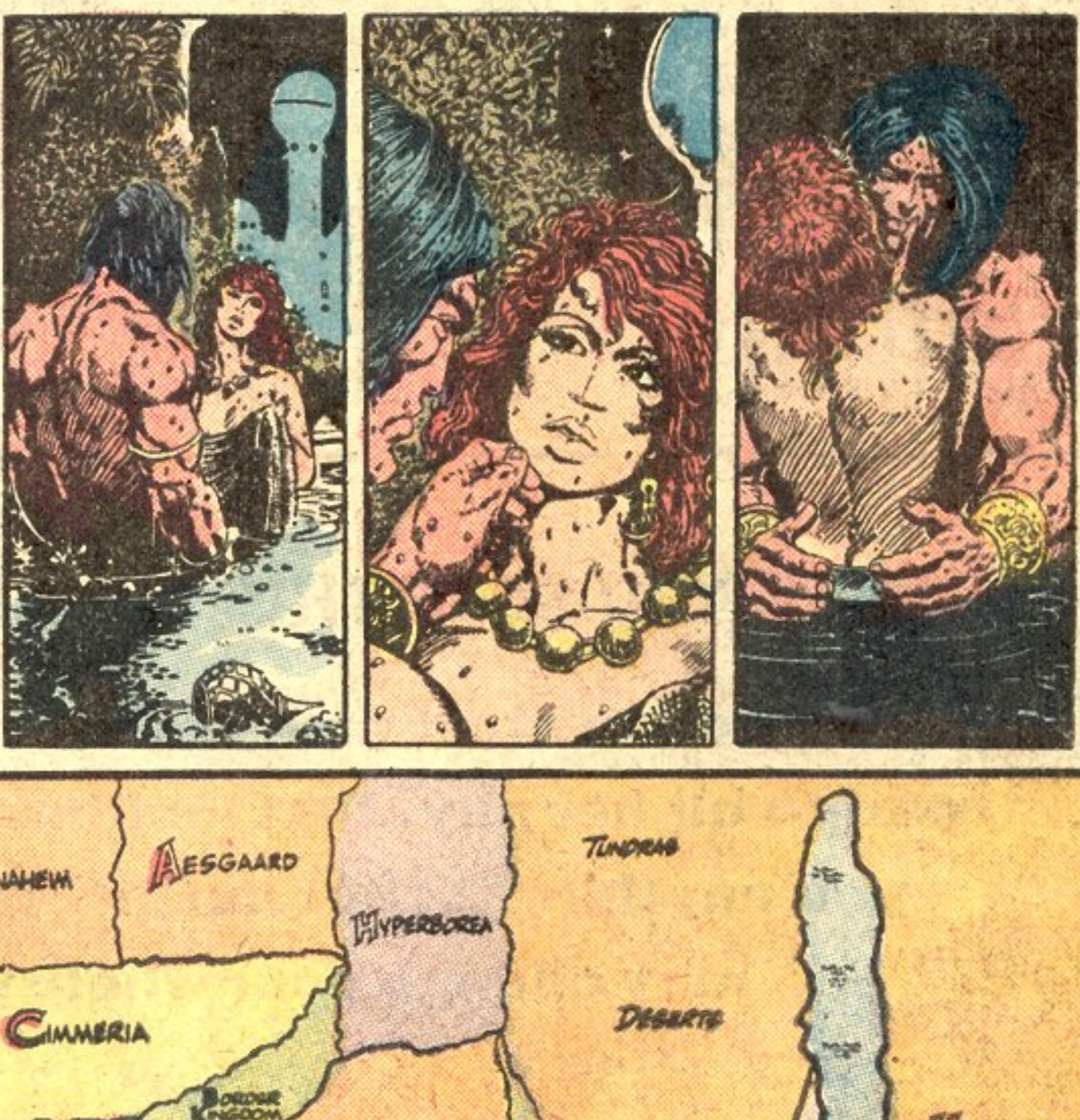
In 1971, CONAN was a runaway favorite as Best Feature, with no less than two of its ten issues nominated for Best Story (#4, "The Tower of the Elephant," and #6, "Devil-Wings over Shadizar"). Barry Smith was nominated as Best Penciler (Dramatic Division), and one Roy Thomas was on hand to pick up the award as Best Writer (Dramatic Division).

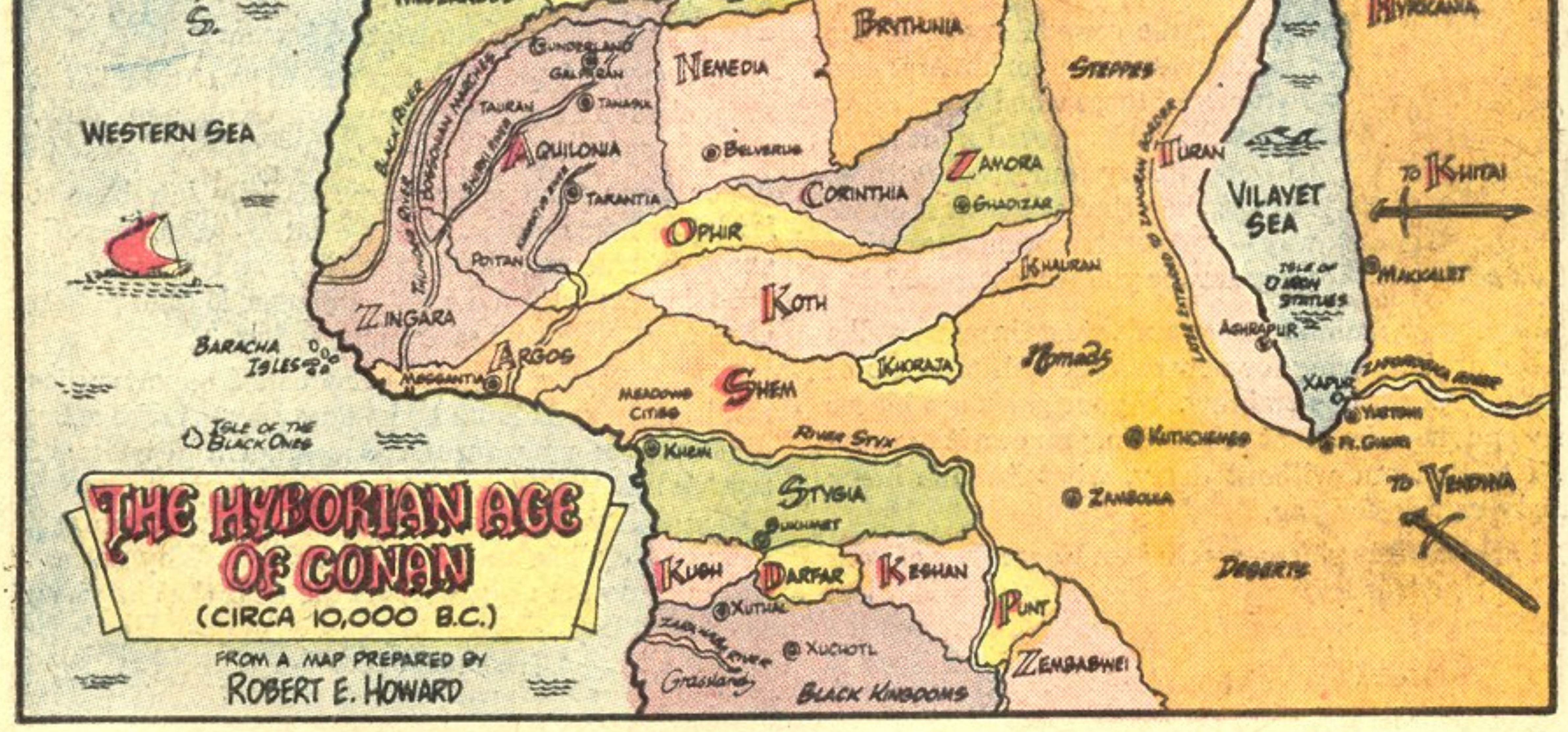
Thus, when the 1972 nominations were announced, it came as no surprise to anyone that once again CONAN (along this time with its sister-mag KULL!) was a nominee for Best Feature, or that Roy and Barry were again nominated in their respective divisions.

And so, when Smilin' Stan decided that Marvel should publish a CONAN KING-SIZE SPECIAL for summer of '73, it was a foregone conclusion that the stories which editor Roy Thomas would select for inclusion would be two of the three award nominees. ("Elephant," incidentally, was selected by a toss-up over "Shadizar" both because it was published slightly earlier *and* because "Elephant" was also the winner of a fan award as best story). Hence our cover designation: a special "Academy Award Issue"!

As to the *winners* of this year's ACBA trophies: Well, let's just say that you'll be able to read the *full list* of awards in a Marvel mag or two any week now. And to date, no other comics company can make that statement!

For shame, Dissenting Competition!
Bravo, CONAN THE BARBARIAN!





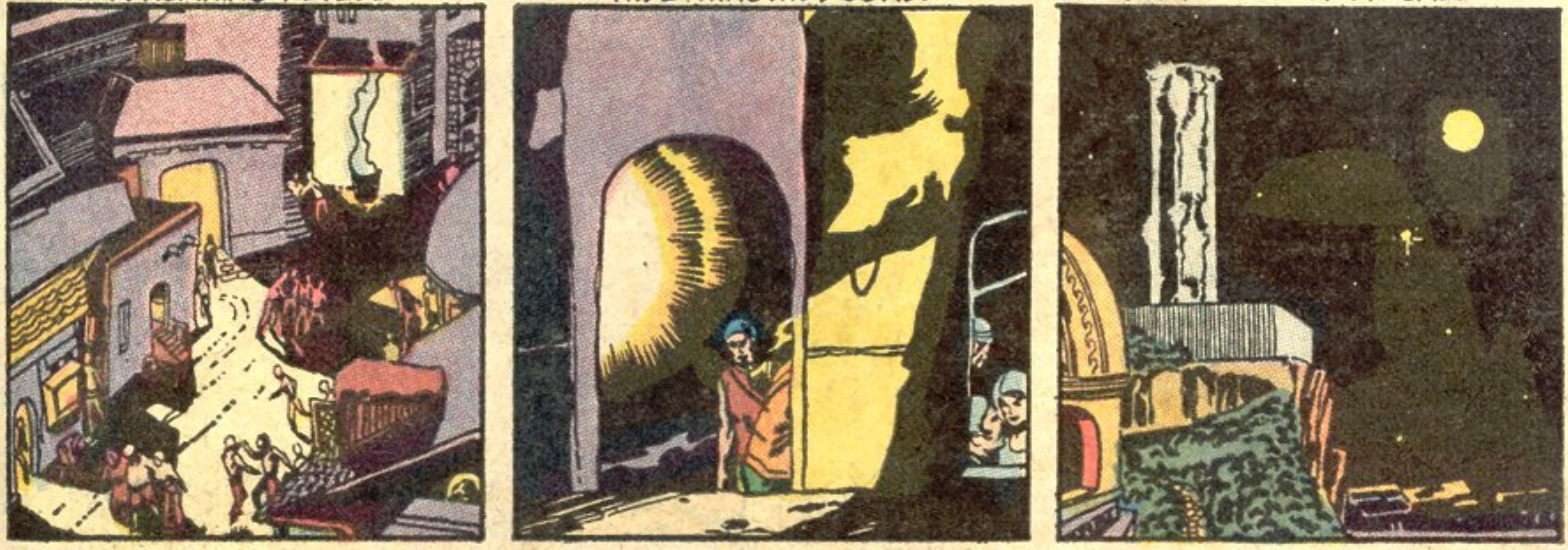
THE HYBORIAN AGE OF CONAN
(CIRCA 10,000 B.C.)
FROM A MAP PREPARED BY
ROBERT E. HOWARD
N.
W.
E.
S.
WESTERN SEA
VANAHEIM
AESGAARD
HYPERBOREA
TUNDRAS
CIMMERIA
PICTISH WILDERNESS
BORDER KINGDOM
BRYTHUNIA
DESERTS
HYRKANIA
STEPPES
NEMEDIA
GUNDERLAND
GALPARAN
TAURAN
TANASUL
BLACK RIVER
BOSSONIAN MARCHES
SHIRKI RIVER
AQUILONIA
BELVERUS
TARANTIA
THUNDER RIVER
KHOROTAS RIVER
POITAIN
CORINTHIA
ZAMORA
SHADIZAR
TURAN
VILAYET SEA
TO KHITAI
OPHIR
KOTH
KHAURAN
ISLE OF IRON STATUES
MAKKALET
ZINGARA
BARACHA ISLES
MESSANTIA
ARGOS
SHEM
MEADOWS CITIES
KHORAJA
Nomads
AGHRAPUR
LATER EXTENDED TO ZAMORAN BORDER
XAPUR
ZAPORASKA RIVER
YUETSHI
FT. GHORI
ISLE OF THE BLACK ONES
KHEMI
RIVER STYX
KUTHCHEMES
ZAMBOULA
TO VENDHYA
STYGIA
SUKHMET
KUSH
DARFAR
KESHAN
PUNT
XUTHAL
ZARKHEBA RIVER
XUCHOTL
Grasslands
BLACK KINGDOMS
ZEMBABWEI
DESERTS

CONAN THE BARBARIAN!™

TORCHES FLARE MURKILY IN THE *MAUL* THIS NIGHT--- WHERE CERTAIN DENIZENS OF *ARENJUN*, THIEF-CITY OF *ZAMORA*, HOLD THEIR ROARING REVELS.

STEEL GLINTS IN THE SHADOWS, WHERE RISES THE SHRILL LAUGHTER OF WOMEN--- AND SNATCHES OF BOISTEROUS *SONG* RUSH OUT THRU WIDE-THROWN DOORS.

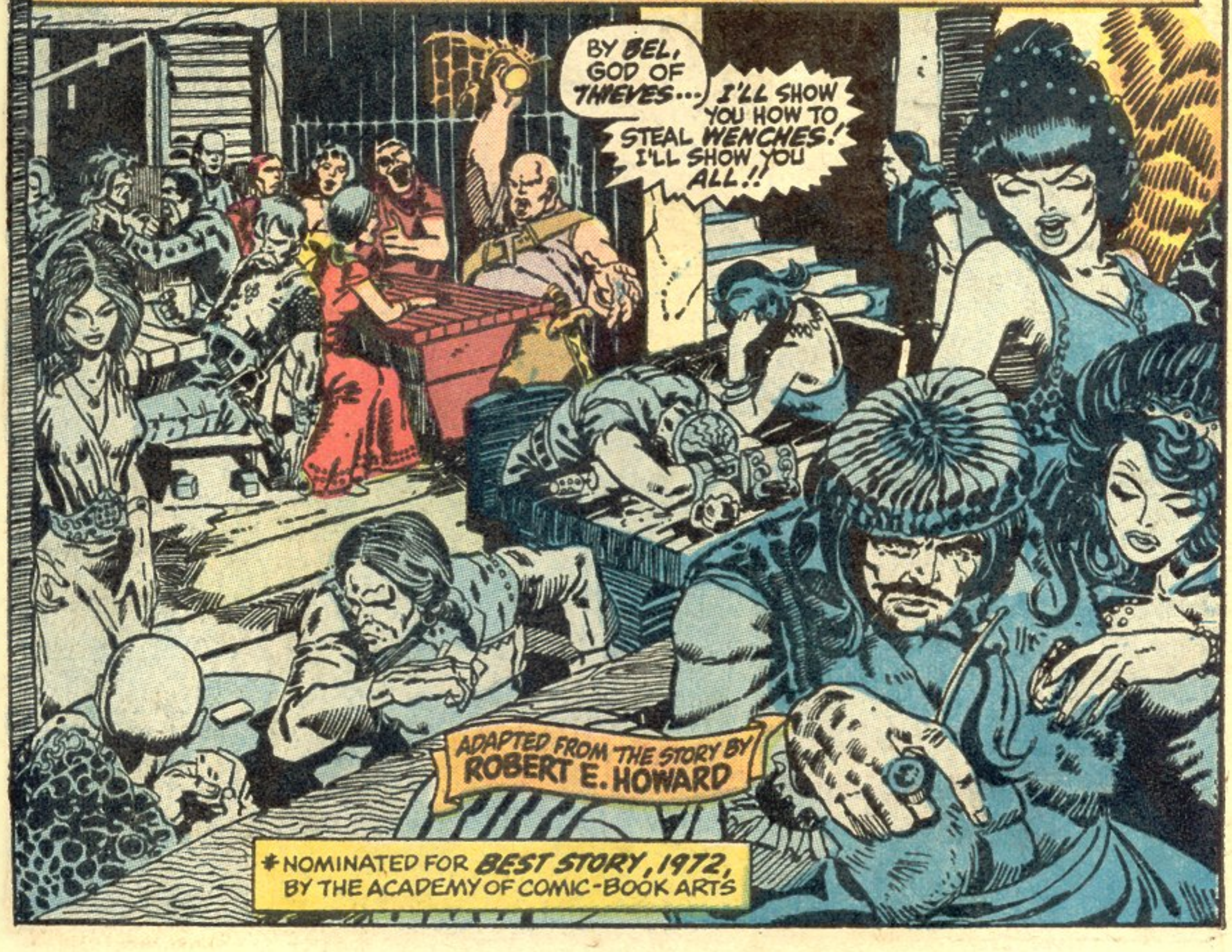
WHILE, HIGH *ABOVE* THE REST OF THE CITY--- ITS JEWELED RIM *GLITTERING* IN THE STARLIGHT--- LOOKS DOWN THE SILENT, SHIMMERING SHAFT WHICH MEN CALL---



THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT!*

STAN LEE *EDITOR* • **ROY THOMAS** *WRITER* • **BARRY SMITH** *ARTIST* • **SAL BUSCEMA** *INKER* • **SAM ROSEN** *LETTERER*

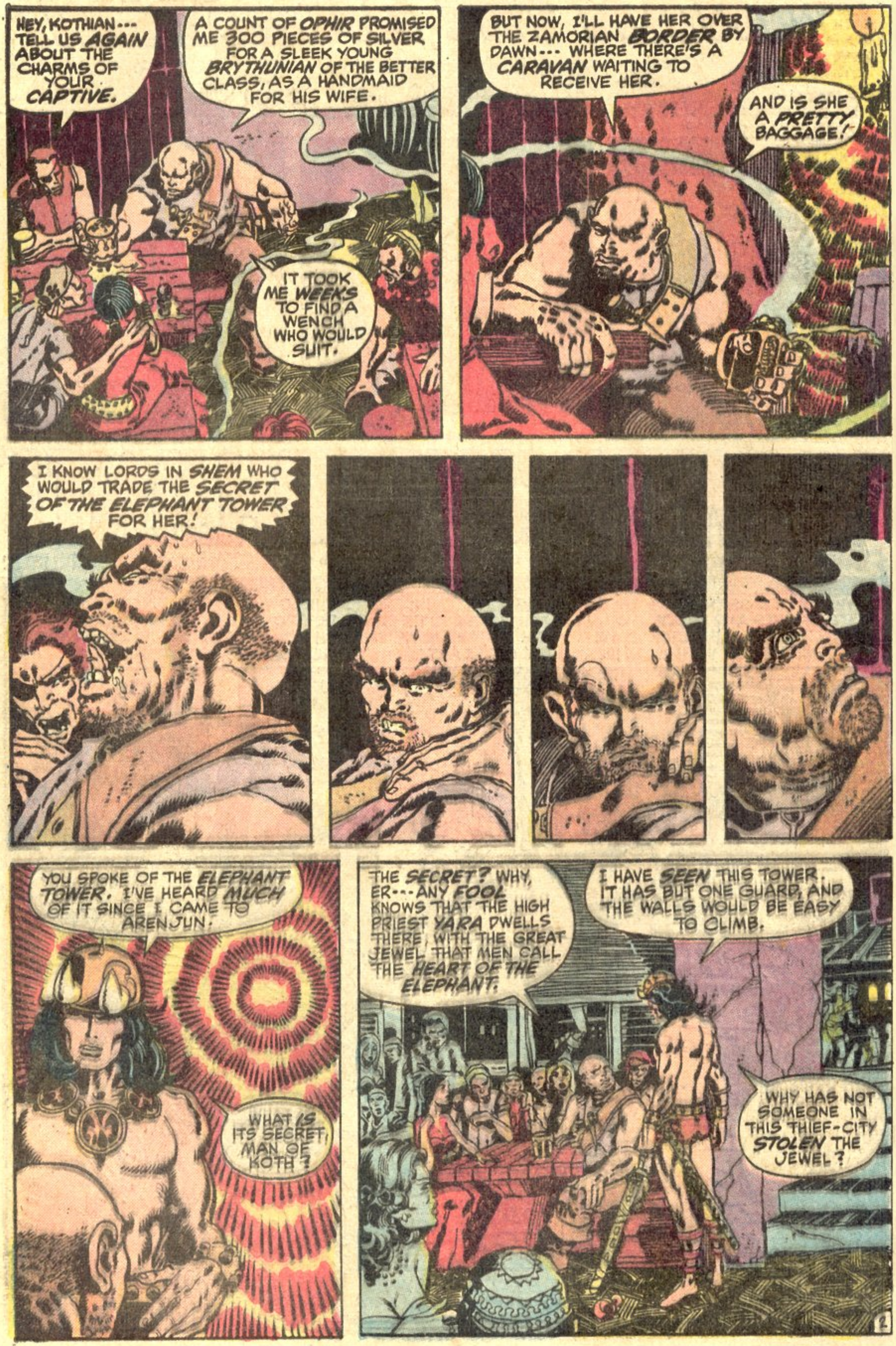
AND, IN ONE OF THE DENS BELOW, *MERRIMENT* THUNDERS TO THE LOW, SMOKE-STAINED ROOF, AS CUTTHROATS AND RASCALS OF ALL NATIONS LISTEN TO THE BAWDY JESTS OF A FAT, GROSS *ROGUE*--- A PROFESSIONAL ABDUCTOR COME UP FROM DISTANT *KOTH* TO TEACH WOMAN-STEALING TO ZAMORIANS WHO WERE *BORN* WITH MORE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ART THAN HE COULD EVER HOPE TO ATTAIN---

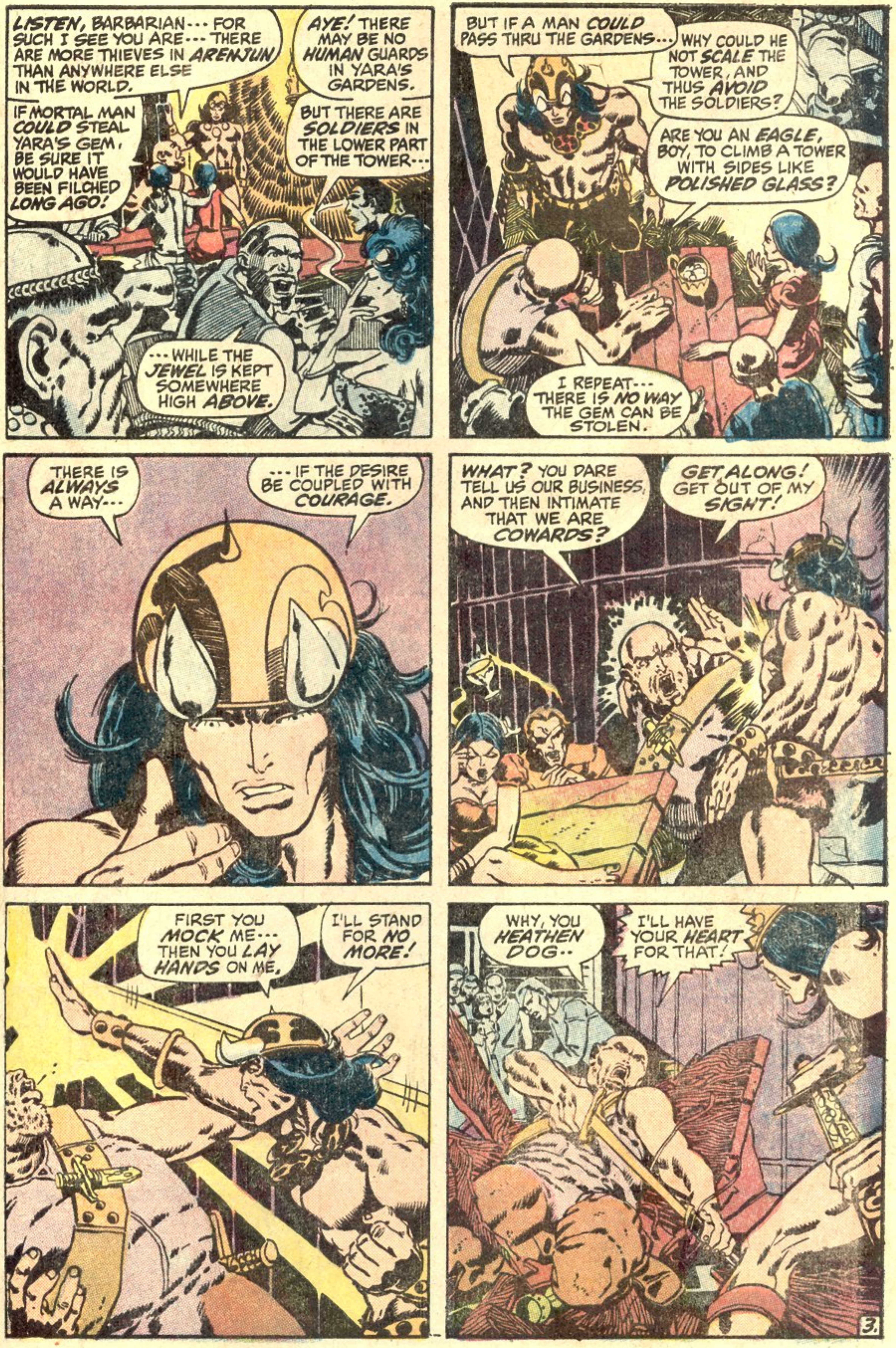

BY *BEL*, GOD OF *THIEVES*---
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO STEAL *WENCHES*! I'LL SHOW YOU *ALL*!!

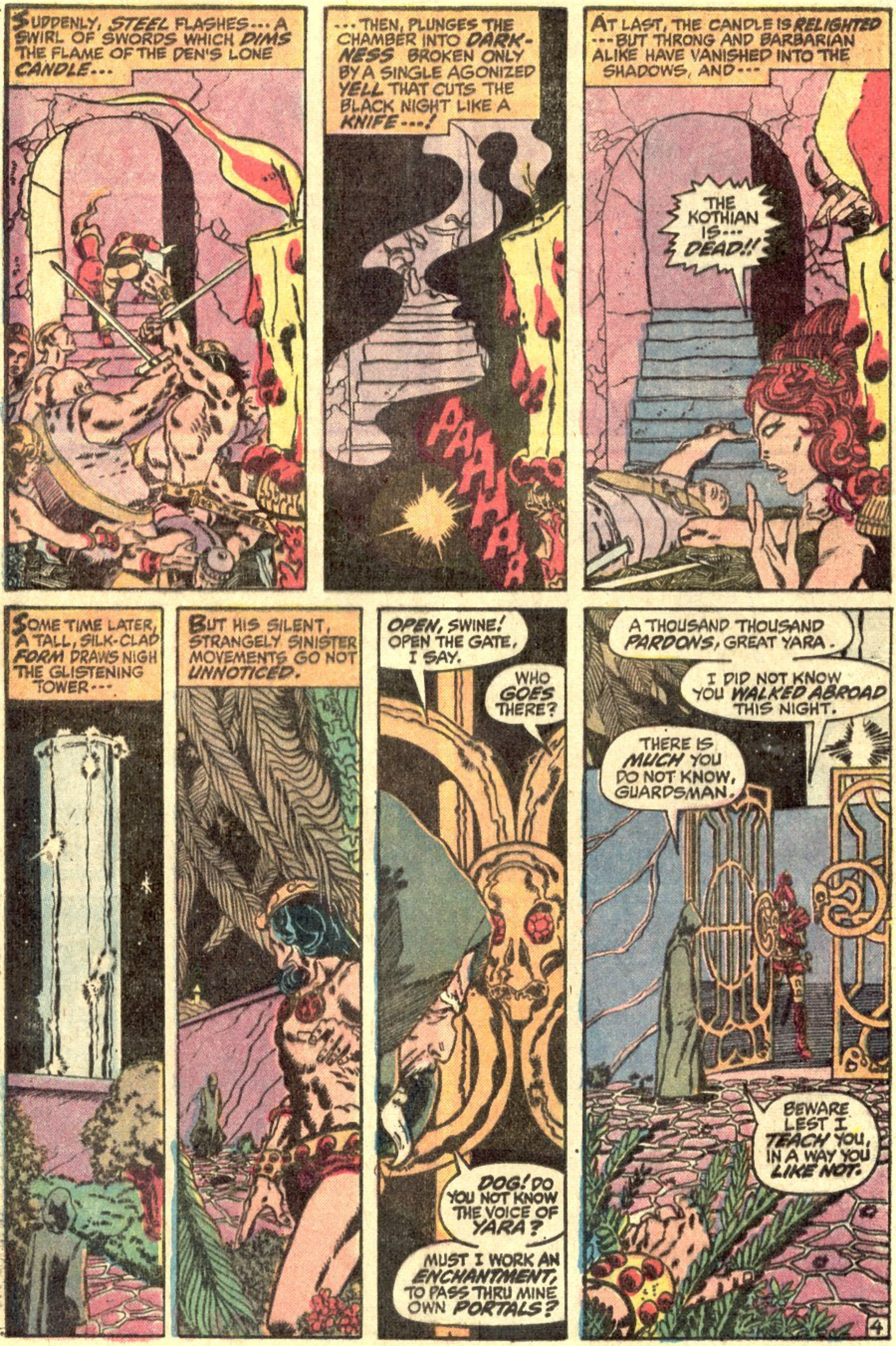
ADAPTED FROM THE STORY BY **ROBERT E. HOWARD**

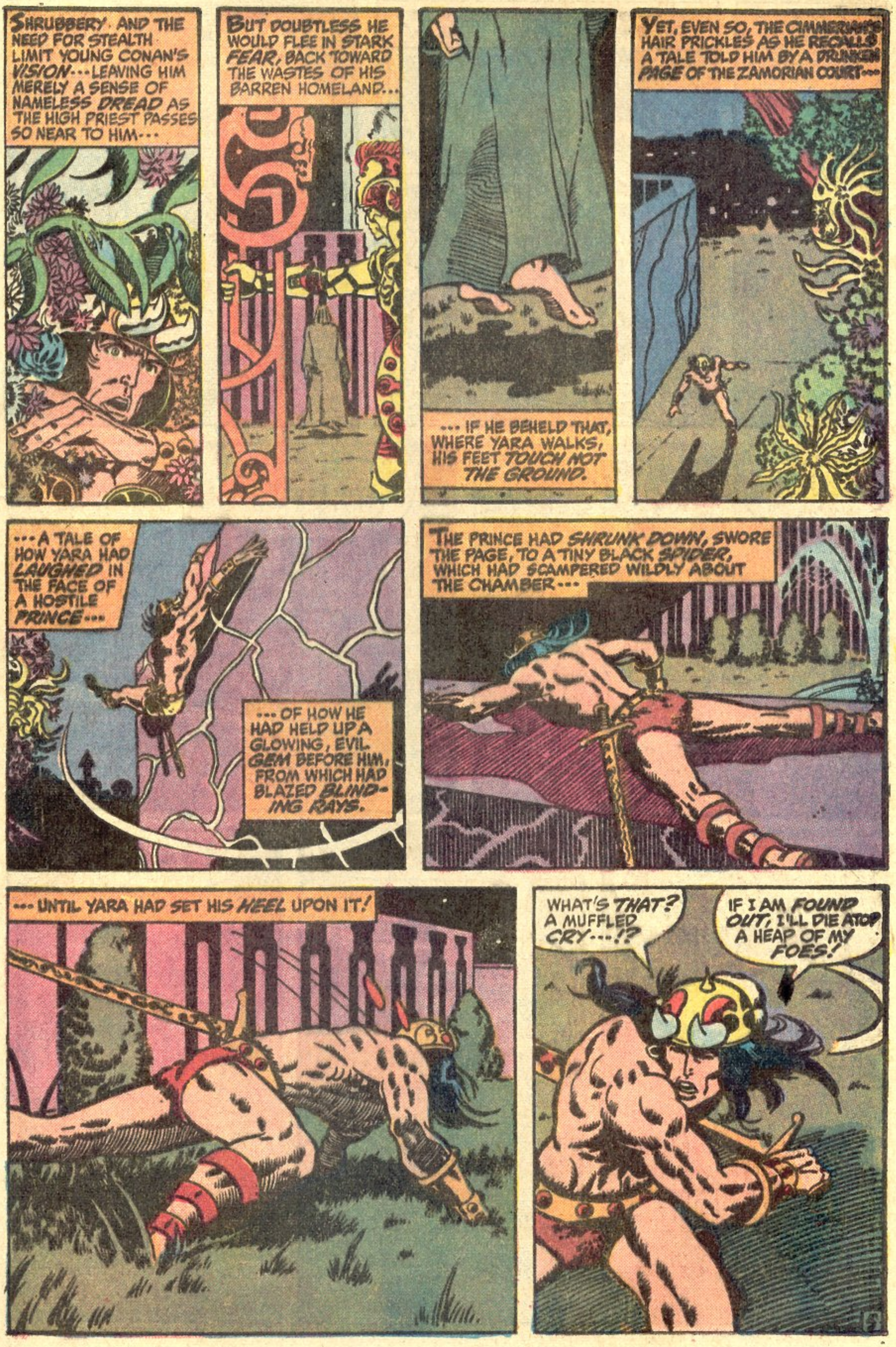
---

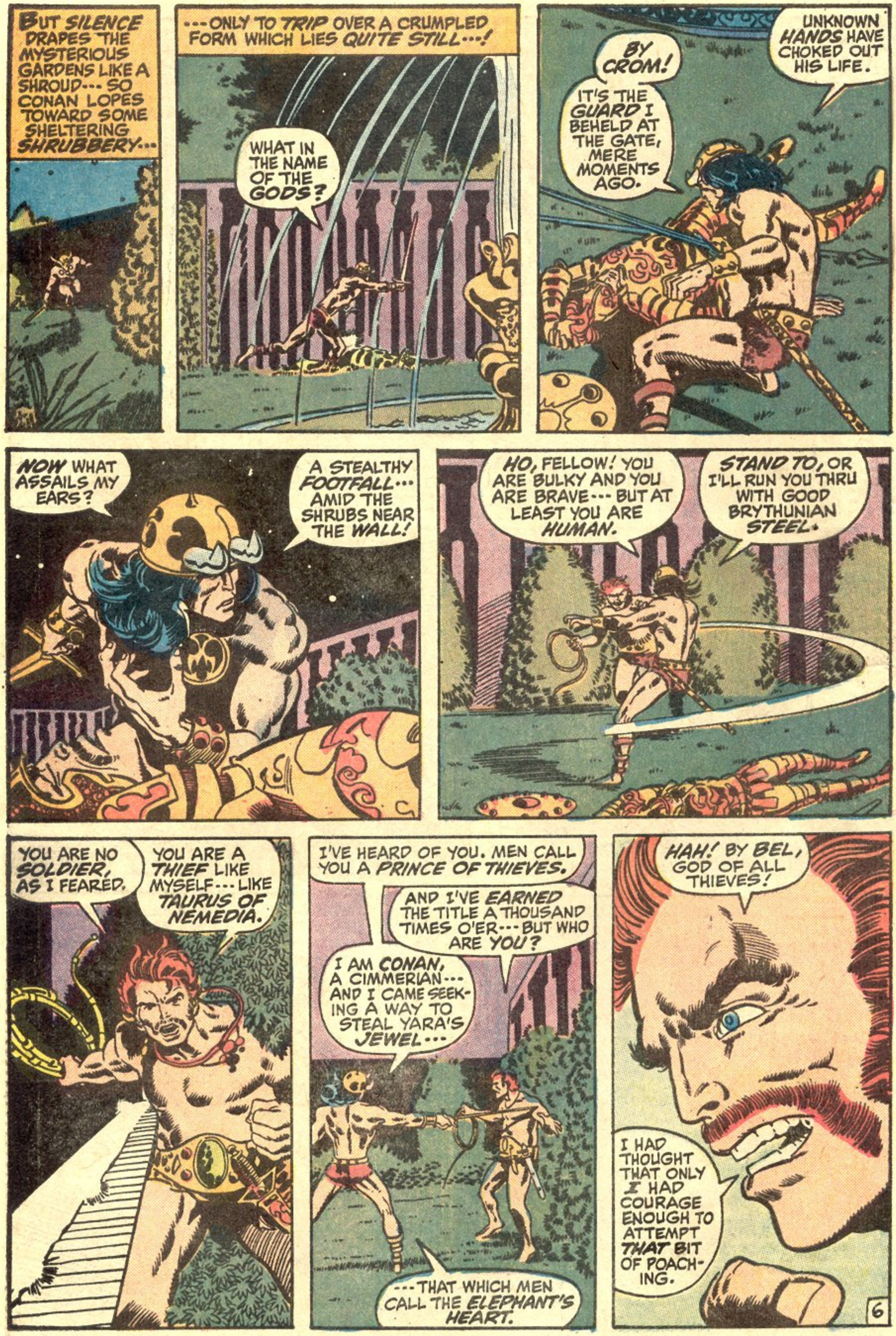
*NOMINATED FOR *BEST STORY, 1972*, BY THE ACADEMY OF COMIC-BOOK ARTS

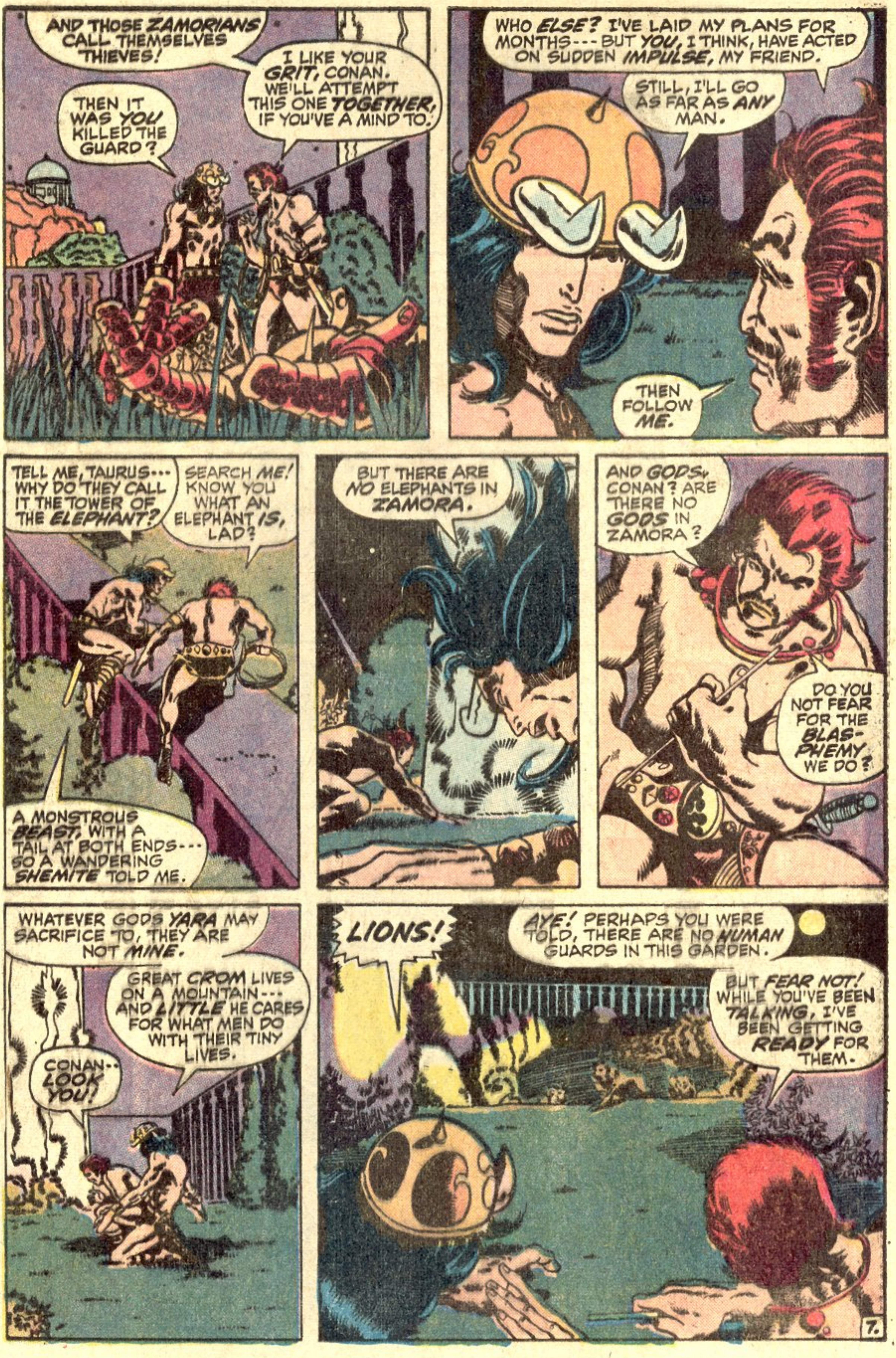

HEY, KOTHIAN--- TELL US AGAIN ABOUT THE CHARMS OF YOUR CAPTIVE.
A COUNT OF OPHIR PROMISED ME 300 PIECES OF SILVER FOR A SLEEK YOUNG BRYTHUNIAN OF THE BETTER CLASS, AS A HANDMAID FOR HIS WIFE.
IT TOOK ME WEEKS TO FIND A WENCH WHO WOULD SUIT.
BUT NOW, I'LL HAVE HER OVER THE ZAMORIAN BORDER BY DAWN--- WHERE THERE'S A CARAVAN WAITING TO RECEIVE HER.
AND IS SHE A PRETTY BAGGAGE!
I KNOW LORDS IN SHEM WHO WOULD TRADE THE SECRET OF THE ELEPHANT TOWER FOR HER!
YOU SPOKE OF THE ELEPHANT TOWER. I'VE HEARD MUCH OF IT SINCE I CAME TO ARENJUN.
WHAT IS ITS SECRET, MAN OF KOTH?
THE SECRET? WHY, ER---ANY FOOL KNOWS THAT THE HIGH PRIEST YARA DWELLS THERE, WITH THE GREAT JEWEL THAT MEN CALL THE HEART OF THE ELEPHANT.
I HAVE SEEN THIS TOWER. IT HAS BUT ONE GUARD, AND THE WALLS WOULD BE EASY TO CLIMB.
WHY HAS NOT SOMEONE IN THIS THIEF-CITY STOLEN THE JEWEL?

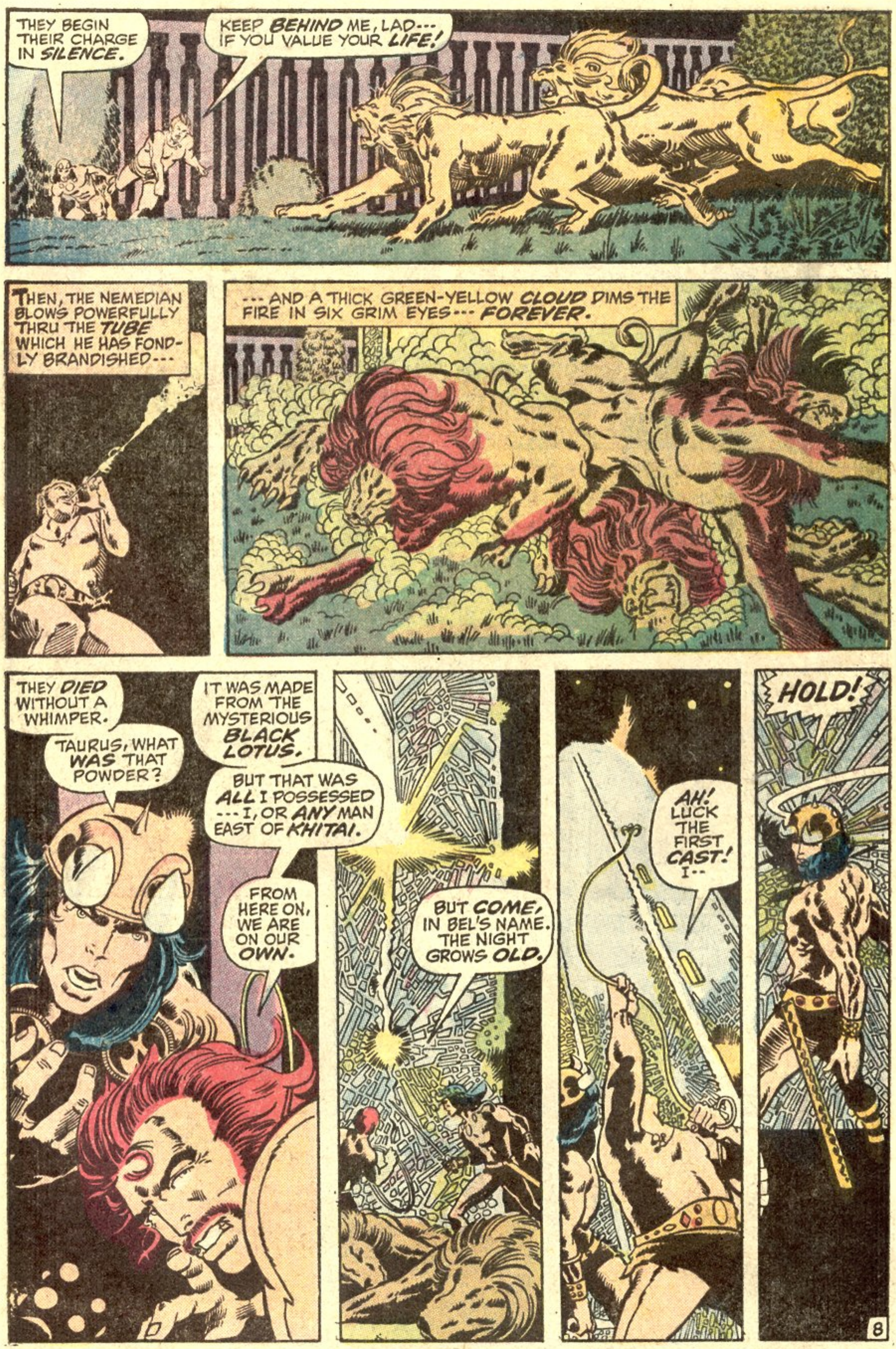

LISTEN, BARBARIAN--- FOR SUCH I SEE YOU ARE--- THERE ARE MORE THIEVES IN ARENJUN THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.
IF MORTAL MAN COULD STEAL YARA'S GEM, BE SURE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FILCHED LONG AGO!
AYE! THERE MAY BE NO HUMAN GUARDS IN YARA'S GARDENS.
BUT THERE ARE SOLDIERS IN THE LOWER PART OF THE TOWER---
---WHILE THE JEWEL IS KEPT SOMEWHERE HIGH ABOVE.
BUT IF A MAN COULD PASS THRU THE GARDENS...
WHY COULD HE NOT SCALE THE TOWER, AND THUS AVOID THE SOLDIERS?
ARE YOU AN EAGLE, BOY, TO CLIMB A TOWER WITH SIDES LIKE POLISHED GLASS?
I REPEAT--- THERE IS NO WAY THE GEM CAN BE STOLEN.
THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY---
---IF THE DESIRE BE COUPLED WITH COURAGE.
WHAT? YOU DARE TELL US OUR BUSINESS, AND THEN INTIMATE THAT WE ARE COWARDS?
GET ALONG! GET OUT OF MY SIGHT!
FIRST YOU MOCK ME--- THEN YOU LAY HANDS ON ME.
I'LL STAND FOR NO MORE!
WHY, YOU HEATHEN DOG..
I'LL HAVE YOUR HEART FOR THAT!

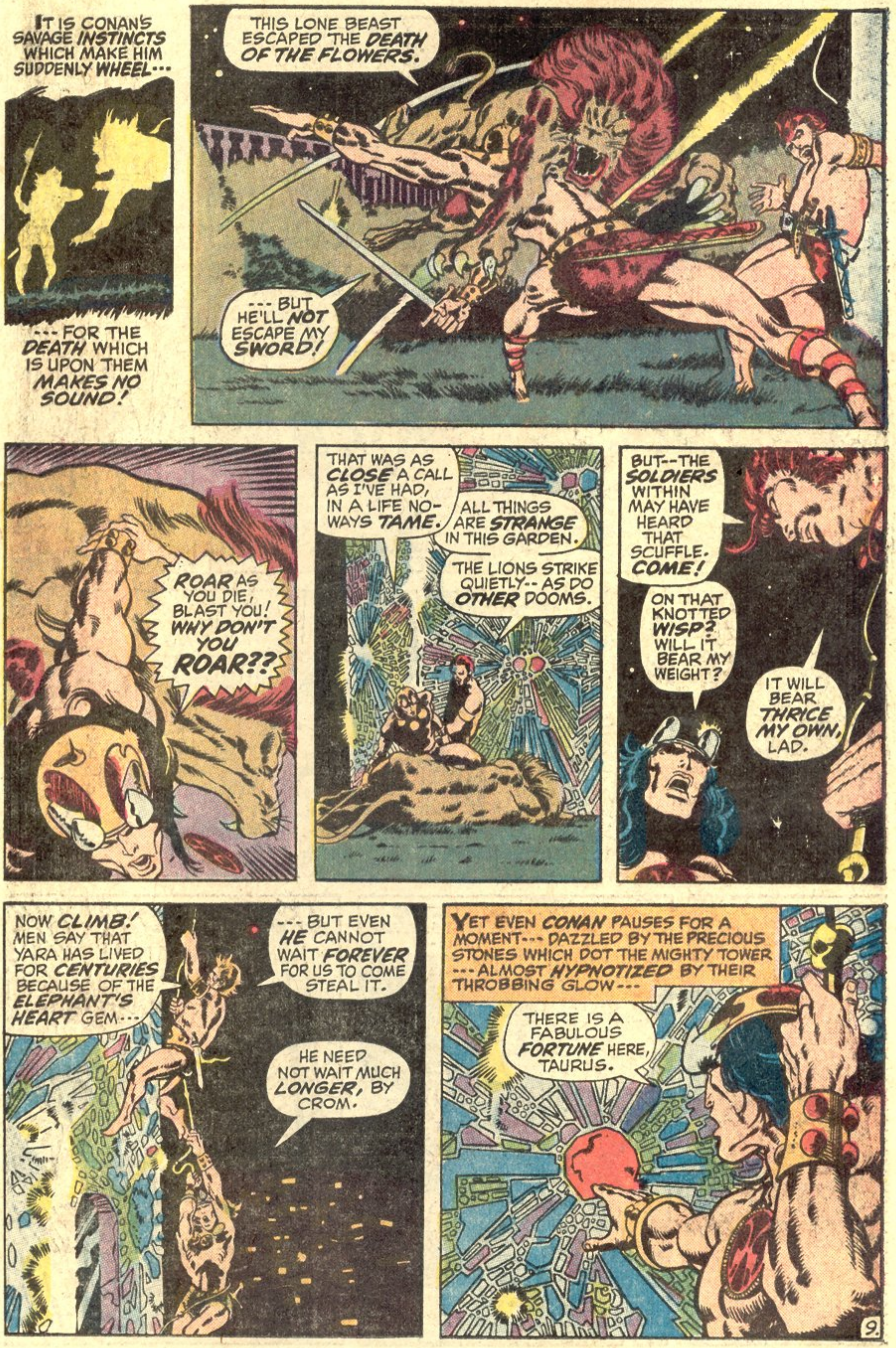

SUDDENLY, STEEL FLASHES... A SWIRL OF SWORDS WHICH DIMS THE FLAME OF THE DEN'S LONE CANDLE...
...THEN, PLUNGES THE CHAMBER INTO DARKNESS BROKEN ONLY BY A SINGLE AGONIZED YELL THAT CUTS THE BLACK NIGHT LIKE A KNIFE...!
PAAHAA
AT LAST, THE CANDLE IS RELIGHTED ...BUT THRONG AND BARBARIAN ALIKE HAVE VANISHED INTO THE SHADOWS, AND...
THE KOTHIAN IS... DEAD!!
SOME TIME LATER, A TALL, SILK-CLAD FORM DRAWS NIGH THE GLISTENING TOWER...
BUT HIS SILENT, STRANGELY SINISTER MOVEMENTS GO NOT UNNOTICED.
OPEN, SWINE! OPEN THE GATE, I SAY.
WHO GOES THERE?
DOG! DO YOU NOT KNOW THE VOICE OF YARA?
MUST I WORK AN ENCHANTMENT, TO PASS THRU MINE OWN PORTALS?
A THOUSAND THOUSAND PARDONS, GREAT YARA.
I DID NOT KNOW YOU WALKED ABROAD THIS NIGHT.
THERE IS MUCH YOU DO NOT KNOW, GUARDSMAN.
BEWARE LEST I TEACH YOU, IN A WAY YOU LIKE NOT.
4

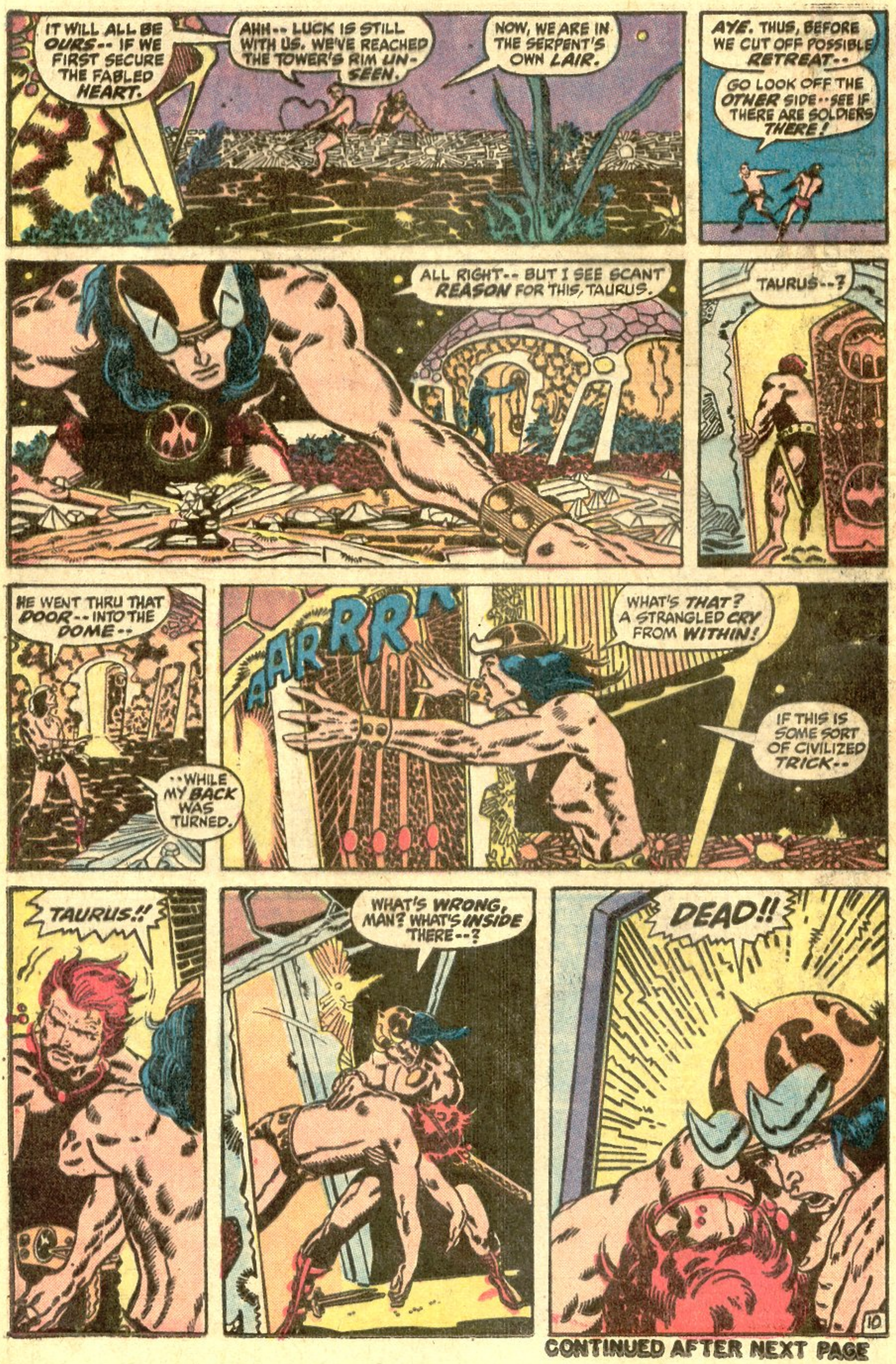

SHRUBBERY AND THE NEED FOR STEALTH LIMIT YOUNG CONAN'S *VISION*---LEAVING HIM MERELY A SENSE OF NAMELESS *DREAD* AS THE HIGH PRIEST PASSES SO NEAR TO HIM---
BUT DOUBTLESS HE WOULD FLEE IN STARK *FEAR*, BACK TOWARD THE WASTES OF HIS BARREN HOMELAND...
---IF HE BEHELD THAT, WHERE YARA WALKS, HIS FEET *TOUCH NOT THE GROUND.*
YET, EVEN SO, THE CIMMERIAN'S HAIR PRICKLES AS HE RECALLS A TALE TOLD HIM BY A *DRUNKEN PAGE* OF THE ZAMORIAN COURT---
---A TALE OF HOW YARA HAD *LAUGHED* IN THE FACE OF A HOSTILE *PRINCE*---
---OF HOW HE HAD HELD UP A GLOWING, EVIL *GEM* BEFORE HIM, FROM WHICH HAD BLAZED *BLINDING RAYS.*
THE PRINCE HAD *SHRUNK DOWN*, SWORE THE PAGE, TO A TINY BLACK *SPIDER*, WHICH HAD SCAMPERED WILDLY ABOUT THE CHAMBER---
---UNTIL YARA HAD SET HIS *HEEL* UPON IT!
WHAT'S *THAT?* A MUFFLED *CRY*---!?
IF I AM *FOUND OUT*, I'LL DIE ATOP A HEAP OF MY *FOES!*


BUT SILENCE DRAPES THE MYSTERIOUS GARDENS LIKE A SHROUD--- SO CONAN LOPES TOWARD SOME SHELTERING SHRUBBERY...
---ONLY TO TRIP OVER A CRUMPLED FORM WHICH LIES QUITE STILL---!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GODS?
BY CROM!
IT'S THE GUARD I BEHELD AT THE GATE, MERE MOMENTS AGO.
UNKNOWN HANDS HAVE CHOKED OUT HIS LIFE.
NOW WHAT ASSAILS MY EARS?
A STEALTHY FOOTFALL--- AMID THE SHRUBS NEAR THE WALL!
HO, FELLOW! YOU ARE BULKY AND YOU ARE BRAVE--- BUT AT LEAST YOU ARE HUMAN.
STAND TO, OR I'LL RUN YOU THRU WITH GOOD BRYTHUNIAN STEEL.
YOU ARE NO SOLDIER, AS I FEARED.
YOU ARE A THIEF LIKE MYSELF--- LIKE TAURUS OF NEMEDIA.
I'VE HEARD OF YOU. MEN CALL YOU A PRINCE OF THIEVES.
AND I'VE EARNED THE TITLE A THOUSAND TIMES O'ER--- BUT WHO ARE YOU?
I AM CONAN, A CIMMERIAN--- AND I CAME SEEKING A WAY TO STEAL YARA'S JEWEL---
---THAT WHICH MEN CALL THE ELEPHANT'S HEART.
HAH! BY BEL, GOD OF ALL THIEVES!
I HAD THOUGHT THAT ONLY I HAD COURAGE ENOUGH TO ATTEMPT THAT BIT OF POACHING.


AND THOSE ZAMORIANS CALL THEMSELVES THIEVES!
I LIKE YOUR GRIT, CONAN. WE'LL ATTEMPT THIS ONE TOGETHER, IF YOU'VE A MIND TO.
THEN IT WAS YOU KILLED THE GUARD?
WHO ELSE? I'VE LAID MY PLANS FOR MONTHS--- BUT YOU, I THINK, HAVE ACTED ON SUDDEN IMPULSE, MY FRIEND.
STILL, I'LL GO AS FAR AS ANY MAN.
THEN FOLLOW ME.
TELL ME, TAURUS--- WHY DO THEY CALL IT THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT?
SEARCH ME! KNOW YOU WHAT AN ELEPHANT IS, LAD?
A MONSTROUS BEAST, WITH A TAIL AT BOTH ENDS--- SO A WANDERING SHEMITE TOLD ME.
BUT THERE ARE NO ELEPHANTS IN ZAMORA.
AND GODS, CONAN? ARE THERE NO GODS IN ZAMORA?
DO YOU NOT FEAR FOR THE BLASPHEMY WE DO?
WHATEVER GODS YARA MAY SACRIFICE TO, THEY ARE NOT MINE.
GREAT CROM LIVES ON A MOUNTAIN--- AND LITTLE HE CARES FOR WHAT MEN DO WITH THEIR TINY LIVES.
CONAN-- LOOK YOU!
LIONS!
AYE! PERHAPS YOU WERE TOLD, THERE ARE NO HUMAN GUARDS IN THIS GARDEN.
BUT FEAR NOT! WHILE YOU'VE BEEN TALKING, I'VE BEEN GETTING READY FOR THEM.


THEY BEGIN THEIR CHARGE IN *SILENCE*.
KEEP *BEHIND* ME, LAD--- IF YOU VALUE YOUR *LIFE!*
THEN, THE NEMEDIAN BLOWS POWERFULLY THRU THE *TUBE* WHICH HE HAS FONDLY BRANDISHED---
---AND A THICK GREEN-YELLOW *CLOUD* DIMS THE FIRE IN SIX GRIM EYES--- *FOREVER*.
THEY *DIED* WITHOUT A WHIMPER.
TAURUS, WHAT *WAS* THAT POWDER?
IT WAS MADE FROM THE MYSTERIOUS *BLACK LOTUS*.
BUT THAT WAS *ALL* I POSSESSED ---I, OR *ANY* MAN EAST OF *KHITAI*.
FROM HERE ON, WE ARE ON OUR *OWN*.
BUT *COME*, IN BEL'S NAME. THE NIGHT GROWS *OLD*.
AH! LUCK THE FIRST *CAST*! I--
HOLD!


IT IS CONAN'S SAVAGE INSTINCTS WHICH MAKE HIM SUDDENLY WHEEL---
--- FOR THE DEATH WHICH IS UPON THEM MAKES NO SOUND!
THIS LONE BEAST ESCAPED THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS.
--- BUT HE'LL NOT ESCAPE MY SWORD!
ROAR AS YOU DIE, BLAST YOU! WHY DON'T YOU ROAR??
THAT WAS AS CLOSE A CALL AS I'VE HAD, IN A LIFE NO-WAYS TAME.
ALL THINGS ARE STRANGE IN THIS GARDEN.
THE LIONS STRIKE QUIETLY-- AS DO OTHER DOOMS.
BUT--THE SOLDIERS WITHIN MAY HAVE HEARD THAT SCUFFLE. COME!
ON THAT KNOTTED WISP? WILL IT BEAR MY WEIGHT?
IT WILL BEAR THRICE MY OWN, LAD.
NOW CLIMB! MEN SAY THAT YARA HAS LIVED FOR CENTURIES BECAUSE OF THE ELEPHANT'S HEART GEM---
--- BUT EVEN HE CANNOT WAIT FOREVER FOR US TO COME STEAL IT.
HE NEED NOT WAIT MUCH LONGER, BY CROM.
YET EVEN CONAN PAUSES FOR A MOMENT--- DAZZLED BY THE PRECIOUS STONES WHICH DOT THE MIGHTY TOWER --- ALMOST HYPNOTIZED BY THEIR THROBBING GLOW---
THERE IS A FABULOUS FORTUNE HERE, TAURUS.


IT WILL ALL BE OURS-- IF WE FIRST SECURE THE FABLED HEART.
AHH-- LUCK IS STILL WITH US. WE'VE REACHED THE TOWER'S RIM UNSEEN.
NOW, WE ARE IN THE SERPENT'S OWN LAIR.
AYE. THUS, BEFORE WE CUT OFF POSSIBLE RETREAT--
GO LOOK OFF THE OTHER SIDE--SEE IF THERE ARE SOLDIERS THERE!
ALL RIGHT-- BUT I SEE SCANT REASON FOR THIS, TAURUS.
TAURUS--?
HE WENT THRU THAT DOOR-- INTO THE DOME--
--WHILE MY BACK WAS TURNED.
AARRRR
WHAT'S THAT? A STRANGLED CRY FROM WITHIN!
IF THIS IS SOME SORT OF CIVILIZED TRICK--
TAURUS!!
WHAT'S WRONG, MAN? WHAT'S INSIDE THERE--?
DEAD!!
10

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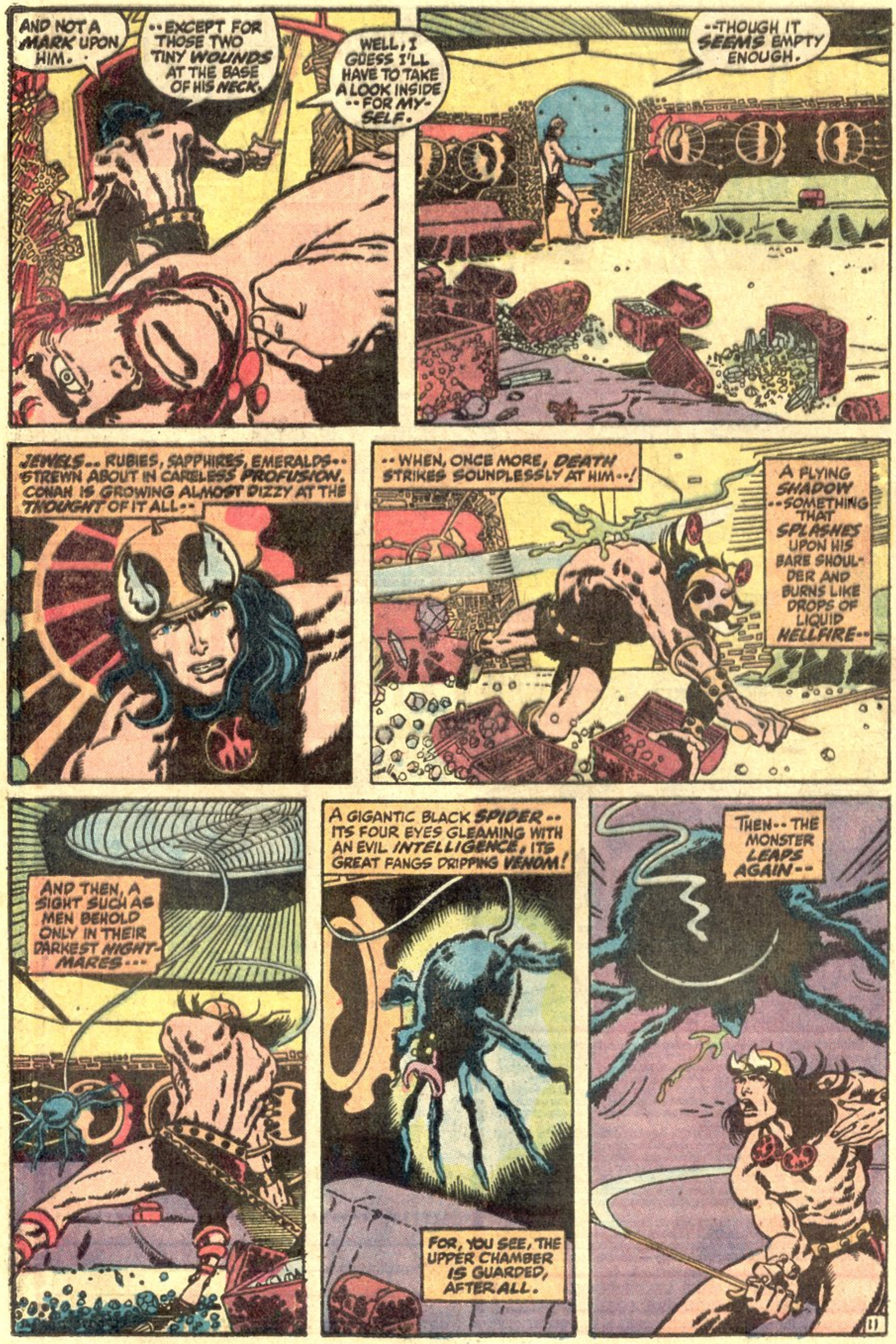
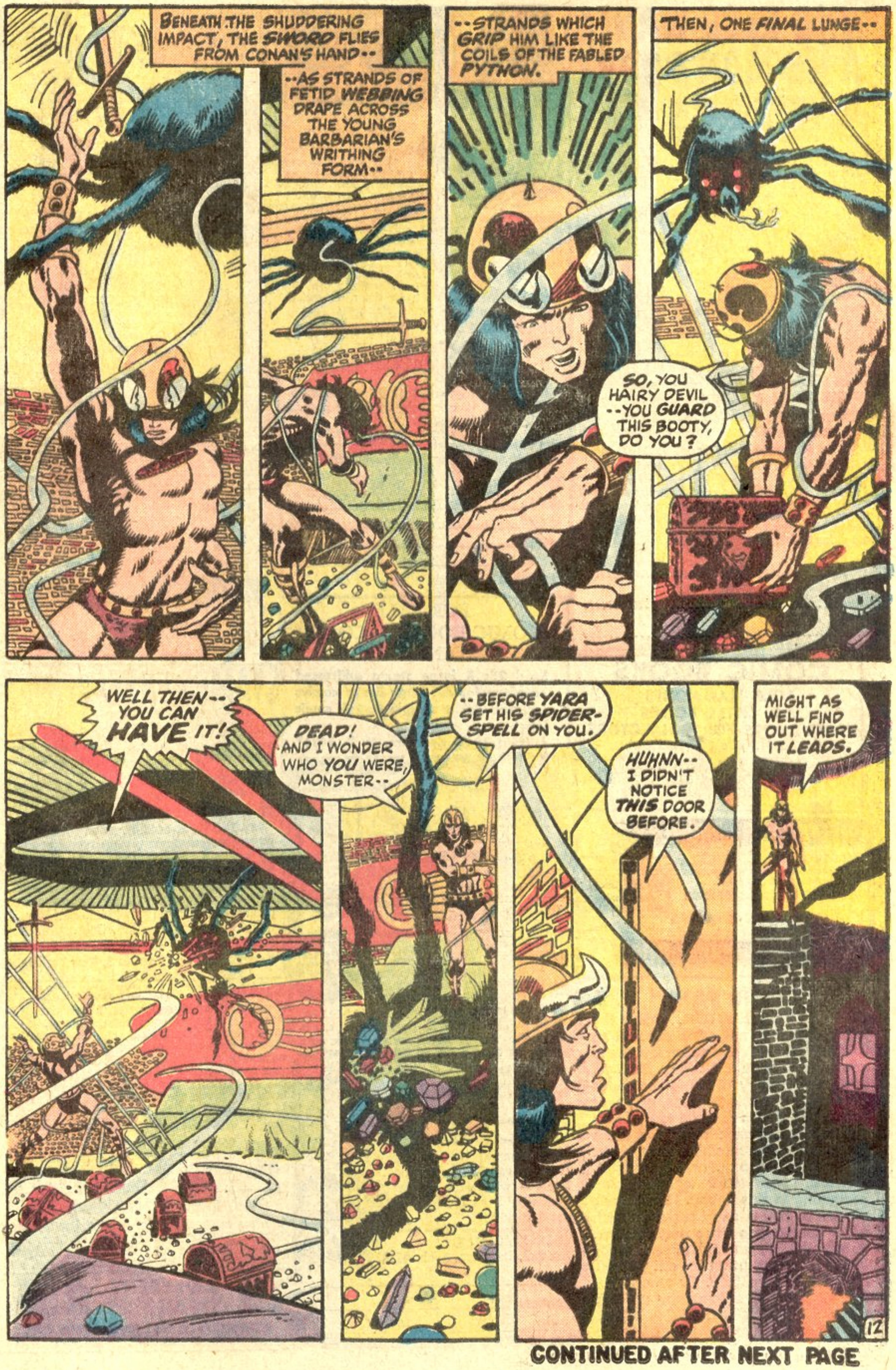

AND NOT A MARK UPON HIM.
--EXCEPT FOR THOSE TWO TINY WOUNDS AT THE BASE OF HIS NECK.
WELL, I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO TAKE A LOOK INSIDE --FOR MYSELF.
--THOUGH IT SEEMS EMPTY ENOUGH.
JEWELS... RUBIES, SAPPHIRES, EMERALDS-- STREWN ABOUT IN CARELESS PROFUSION. CONAN IS GROWING ALMOST DIZZY AT THE THOUGHT OF IT ALL--
--WHEN, ONCE MORE, DEATH STRIKES SOUNDLESSLY AT HIM--!
A FLYING SHADOW --SOMETHING THAT SPLASHES UPON HIS BARE SHOULDER AND BURNS LIKE DROPS OF LIQUID HELLFIRE--
AND THEN, A SIGHT SUCH AS MEN BEHOLD ONLY IN THEIR DARKEST NIGHTMARES...
A GIGANTIC BLACK SPIDER-- ITS FOUR EYES GLEAMING WITH AN EVIL INTELLIGENCE, ITS GREAT FANGS DRIPPING VENOM!
FOR, YOU SEE, THE UPPER CHAMBER IS GUARDED, AFTER ALL.
THEN-- THE MONSTER LEAPS AGAIN--


BENEATH THE SHUDDERING IMPACT, THE SWORD FLIES FROM CONAN'S HAND--
--AS STRANDS OF FETID WEBBING DRAPE ACROSS THE YOUNG BARBARIAN'S WRITHING FORM--
--STRANDS WHICH GRIP HIM LIKE THE COILS OF THE FABLED PYTHON.
THEN, ONE FINAL LUNGE--
SO, YOU HAIRY DEVIL --YOU GUARD THIS BOOTY, DO YOU?
WELL THEN-- YOU CAN HAVE IT!
DEAD! AND I WONDER WHO YOU WERE, MONSTER--
--BEFORE YARA SET HIS SPIDER-SPELL ON YOU.
HUHNN-- I DIDN'T NOTICE THIS DOOR BEFORE.
MIGHT AS WELL FIND OUT WHERE IT LEADS.
12

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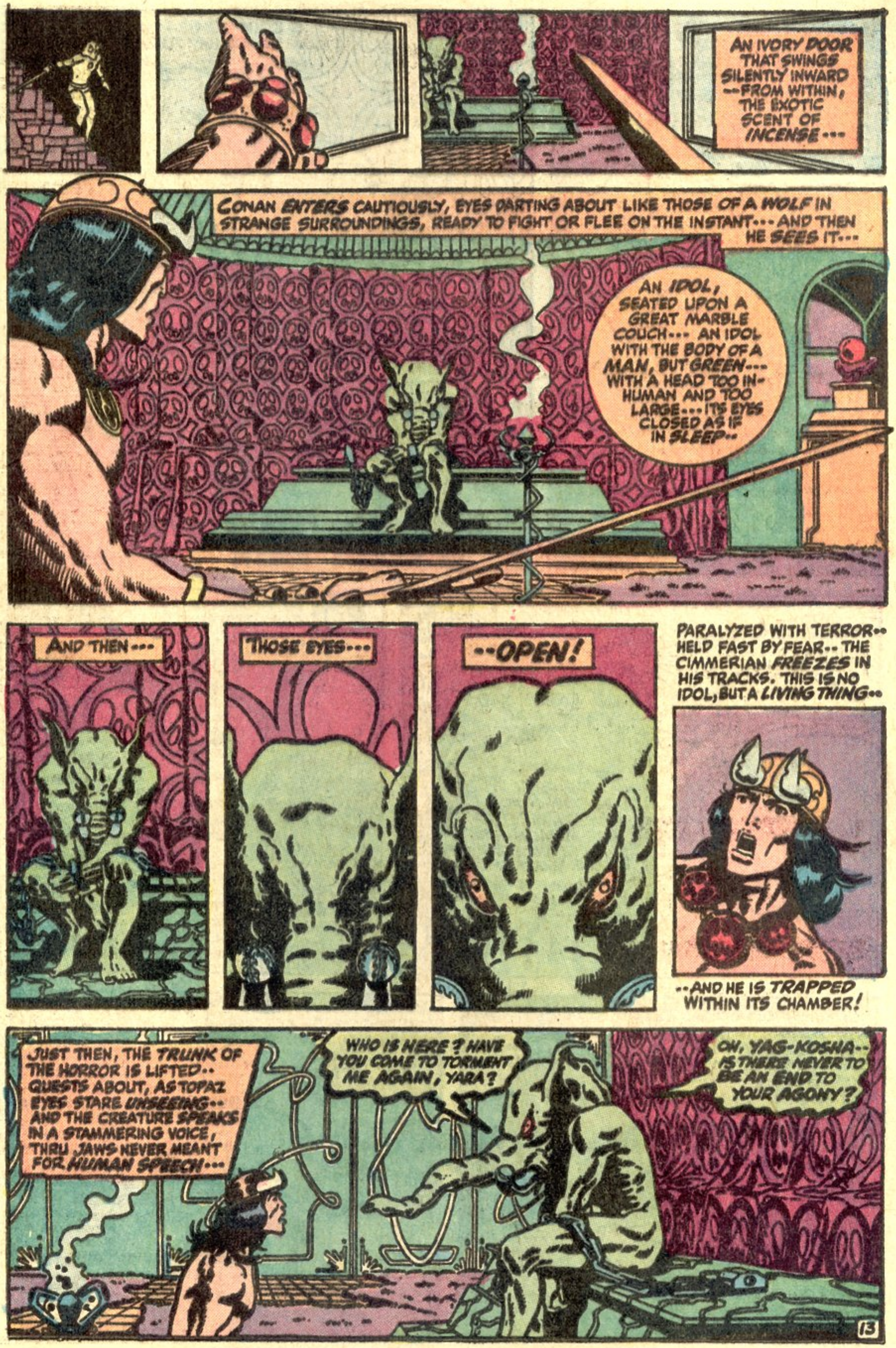
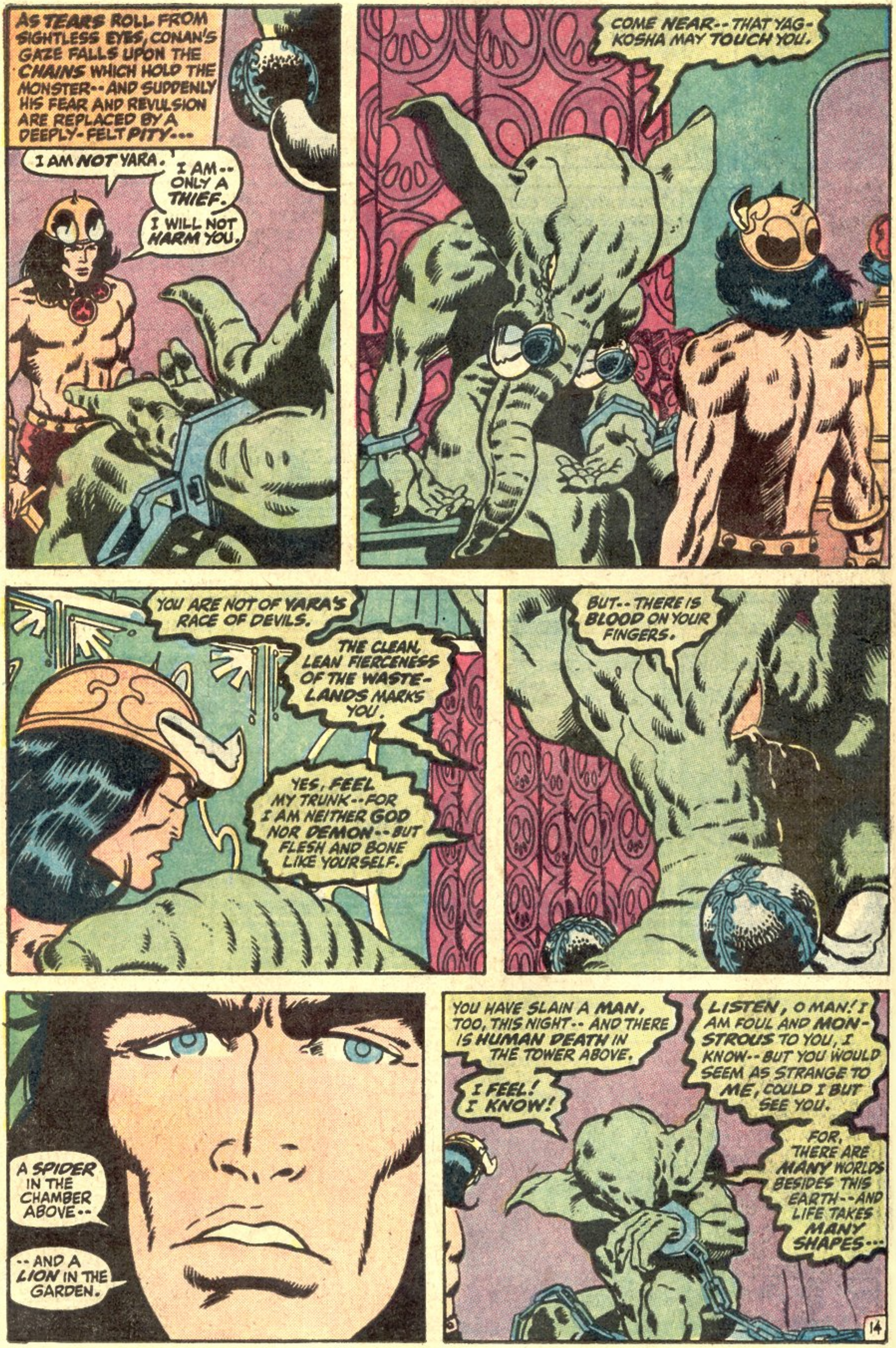
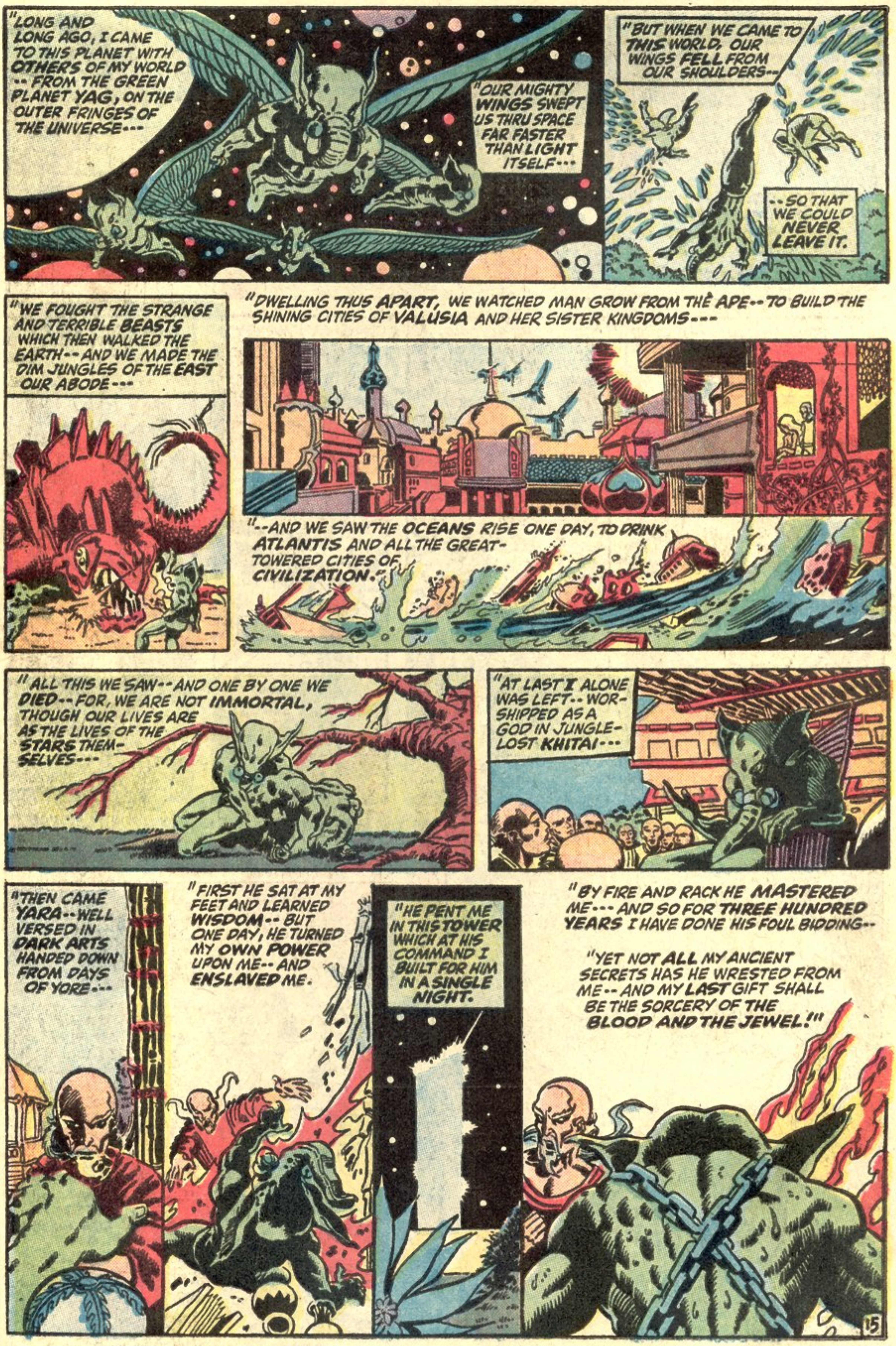
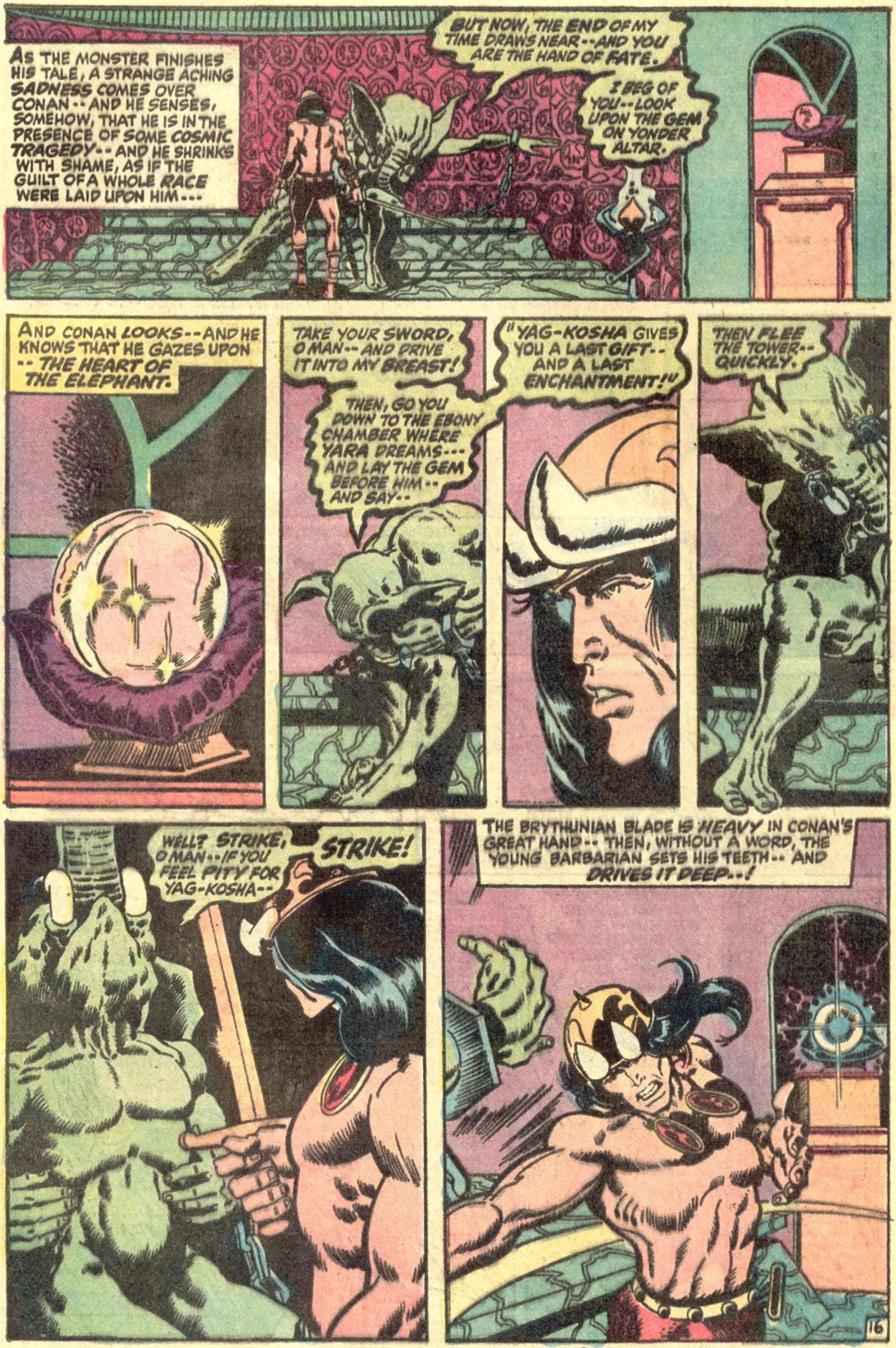

AN IVORY DOOR THAT SWINGS SILENTLY INWARD --FROM WITHIN, THE EXOTIC SCENT OF INCENSE---
CONAN ENTERS CAUTIOUSLY, EYES DARTING ABOUT LIKE THOSE OF A WOLF IN STRANGE SURROUNDINGS, READY TO FIGHT OR FLEE ON THE INSTANT--- AND THEN HE SEES IT---
AN IDOL, SEATED UPON A GREAT MARBLE COUCH--- AN IDOL WITH THE BODY OF A MAN, BUT GREEN--- WITH A HEAD TOO INHUMAN AND TOO LARGE--- ITS EYES CLOSED AS IF IN SLEEP--
AND THEN---
THOSE EYES---
--OPEN!
PARALYZED WITH TERROR-- HELD FAST BY FEAR-- THE CIMMERIAN FREEZES IN HIS TRACKS. THIS IS NO IDOL, BUT A LIVING THING--
--AND HE IS TRAPPED WITHIN ITS CHAMBER!
JUST THEN, THE TRUNK OF THE HORROR IS LIFTED-- QUESTS ABOUT, AS TOPAZ EYES STARE UNSEEING-- AND THE CREATURE SPEAKS IN A STAMMERING VOICE, THRU JAWS NEVER MEANT FOR HUMAN SPEECH---
WHO IS HERE? HAVE YOU COME TO TORMENT ME AGAIN, YARA?
OH, YAG-KOSHA-- IS THERE NEVER TO BE AN END TO YOUR AGONY?


AS TEARS ROLL FROM SIGHTLESS EYES, CONAN'S GAZE FALLS UPON THE CHAINS WHICH HOLD THE MONSTER--AND SUDDENLY HIS FEAR AND REVULSION ARE REPLACED BY A DEEPLY-FELT PITY...
I AM NOT YARA.
I AM--ONLY A THIEF.
I WILL NOT HARM YOU.
COME NEAR--THAT YAG-KOSHA MAY TOUCH YOU.
YOU ARE NOT OF YARA'S RACE OF DEVILS.
THE CLEAN, LEAN FIERCENESS OF THE WASTE-LANDS MARKS YOU.
YES, FEEL MY TRUNK--FOR I AM NEITHER GOD NOR DEMON--BUT FLESH AND BONE LIKE YOURSELF.
BUT--THERE IS BLOOD ON YOUR FINGERS.
A SPIDER IN THE CHAMBER ABOVE--
--AND A LION IN THE GARDEN.
YOU HAVE SLAIN A MAN, TOO, THIS NIGHT--AND THERE IS HUMAN DEATH IN THE TOWER ABOVE.
I FEEL! I KNOW!
LISTEN, O MAN! I AM FOUL AND MONSTROUS TO YOU, I KNOW--BUT YOU WOULD SEEM AS STRANGE TO ME, COULD I BUT SEE YOU.
FOR, THERE ARE MANY WORLDS BESIDES THIS EARTH--AND LIFE TAKES MANY SHAPES...


"LONG AND LONG AGO, I CAME TO THIS PLANET WITH OTHERS OF MY WORLD -- FROM THE GREEN PLANET YAG, ON THE OUTER FRINGES OF THE UNIVERSE---
"OUR MIGHTY WINGS SWEPT US THRU SPACE FAR FASTER THAN LIGHT ITSELF---
"BUT WHEN WE CAME TO THIS WORLD, OUR WINGS FELL FROM OUR SHOULDERS--
--SO THAT WE COULD NEVER LEAVE IT.
"WE FOUGHT THE STRANGE AND TERRIBLE BEASTS WHICH THEN WALKED THE EARTH -- AND WE MADE THE DIM JUNGLES OF THE EAST OUR ABODE---
"DWELLING THUS APART, WE WATCHED MAN GROW FROM THE APE -- TO BUILD THE SHINING CITIES OF VALUSIA AND HER SISTER KINGDOMS---
"--AND WE SAW THE OCEANS RISE ONE DAY, TO DRINK ATLANTIS AND ALL THE GREAT-TOWERED CITIES OF CIVILIZATION."
"ALL THIS WE SAW -- AND ONE BY ONE WE DIED -- FOR, WE ARE NOT IMMORTAL, THOUGH OUR LIVES ARE AS THE LIVES OF THE STARS THEMSELVES---
"AT LAST I ALONE WAS LEFT -- WORSHIPPED AS A GOD IN JUNGLE-LOST KHITAI---
"THEN CAME YARA -- WELL VERSED IN DARK ARTS HANDED DOWN FROM DAYS OF YORE---
"FIRST HE SAT AT MY FEET AND LEARNED WISDOM -- BUT ONE DAY, HE TURNED MY OWN POWER UPON ME -- AND ENSLAVED ME.
"HE PENT ME IN THIS TOWER WHICH AT HIS COMMAND I BUILT FOR HIM IN A SINGLE NIGHT.
"BY FIRE AND RACK HE MASTERED ME --- AND SO FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS I HAVE DONE HIS FOUL BIDDING--
"YET NOT ALL MY ANCIENT SECRETS HAS HE WRESTED FROM ME -- AND MY LAST GIFT SHALL BE THE SORCERY OF THE BLOOD AND THE JEWEL!"


AS THE MONSTER FINISHES HIS TALE, A STRANGE ACHING SADNESS COMES OVER CONAN -- AND HE SENSES, SOMEHOW, THAT HE IS IN THE PRESENCE OF SOME COSMIC TRAGEDY -- AND HE SHRINKS WITH SHAME, AS IF THE GUILT OF A WHOLE RACE WERE LAID UPON HIM ---
BUT NOW, THE END OF MY TIME DRAWS NEAR -- AND YOU ARE THE HAND OF FATE.
I BEG OF YOU -- LOOK UPON THE GEM ON YONDER ALTAR.
AND CONAN LOOKS -- AND HE KNOWS THAT HE GAZES UPON -- THE HEART OF THE ELEPHANT.
TAKE YOUR SWORD, O MAN -- AND DRIVE IT INTO MY BREAST!
THEN, GO YOU DOWN TO THE EBONY CHAMBER WHERE YARA DREAMS --- AND LAY THE GEM BEFORE HIM -- AND SAY --
"YAG-KOSHA GIVES YOU A LAST GIFT -- AND A LAST ENCHANTMENT!"
THEN FLEE THE TOWER -- QUICKLY.
WELL? STRIKE, O MAN -- IF YOU FEEL PITY FOR YAG-KOSHA --
STRIKE!
THE BRYTHUNIAN BLADE IS HEAVY IN CONAN'S GREAT HAND -- THEN, WITHOUT A WORD, THE YOUNG BARBARIAN SETS HIS TEETH -- AND DRIVES IT DEEP --!

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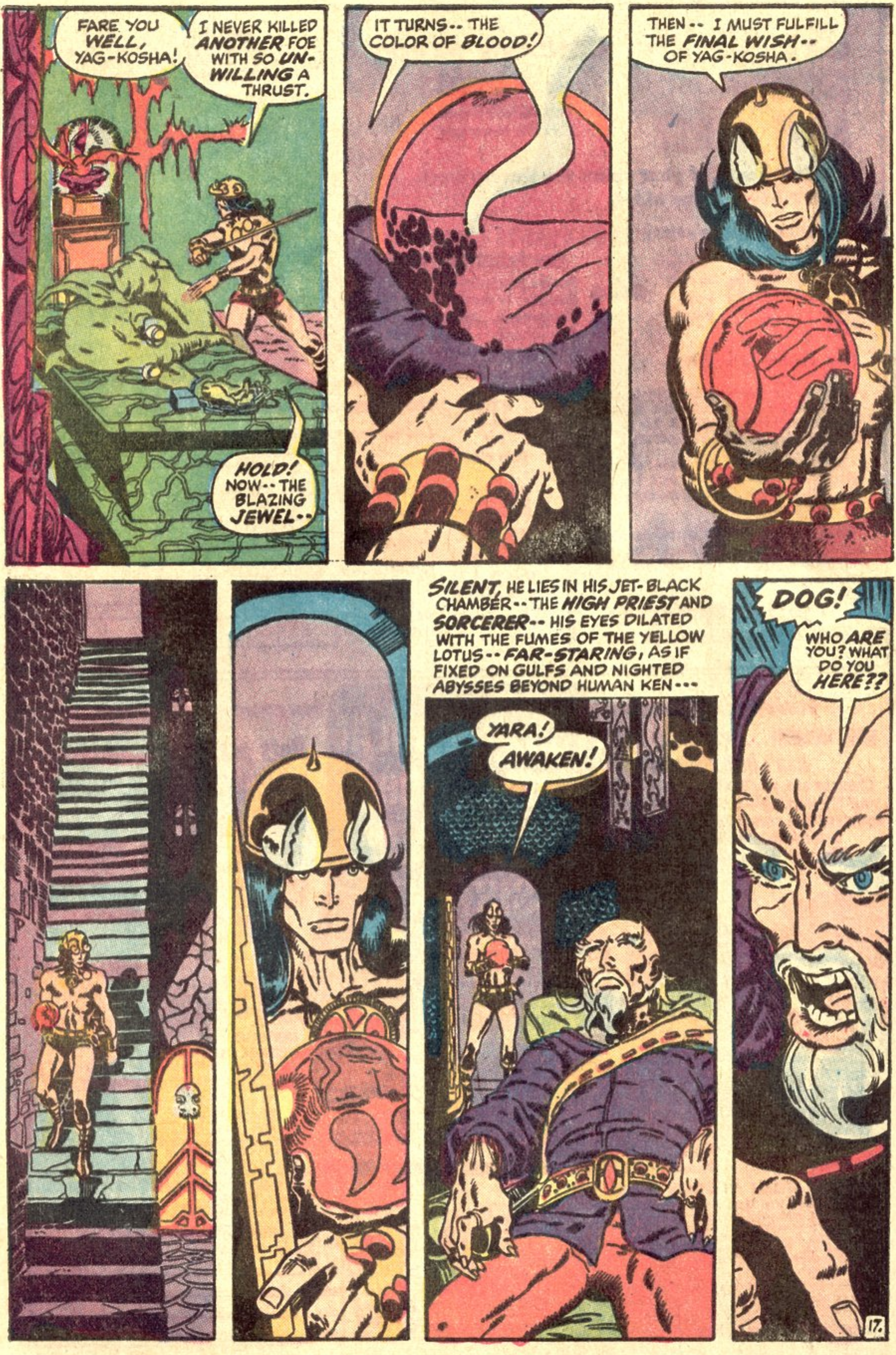
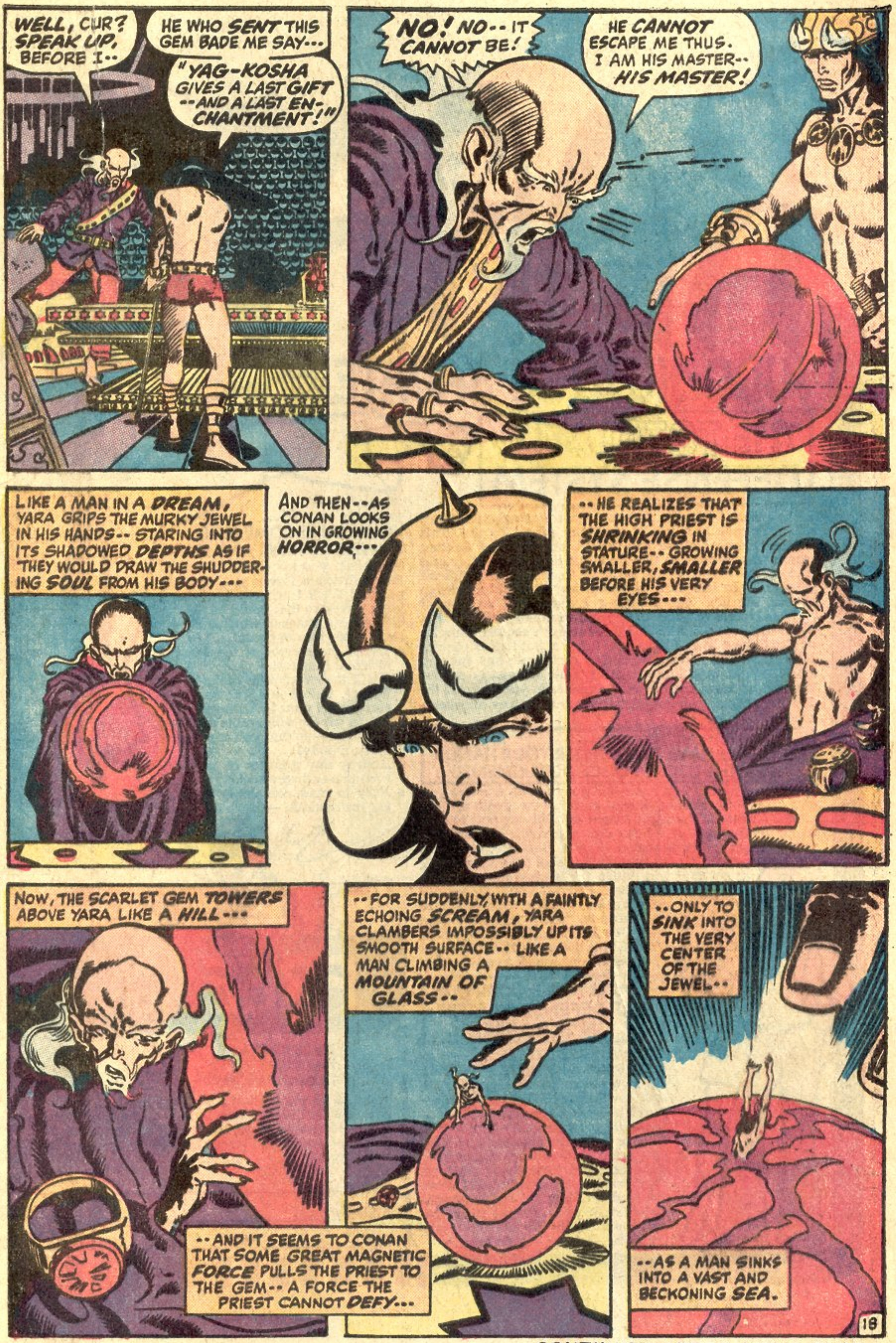

FARE YOU WELL, YAG-KOSHA!
I NEVER KILLED ANOTHER FOE WITH SO UN-WILLING A THRUST.
HOLD! NOW-- THE BLAZING JEWEL--
IT TURNS-- THE COLOR OF BLOOD!
THEN-- I MUST FULFILL THE FINAL WISH-- OF YAG-KOSHA.
SILENT, HE LIES IN HIS JET-BLACK CHAMBER-- THE HIGH PRIEST AND SORCERER-- HIS EYES DILATED WITH THE FUMES OF THE YELLOW LOTUS-- FAR-STARING, AS IF FIXED ON GULFS AND NIGHTED ABYSSES BEYOND HUMAN KEN---
YARA! AWAKEN!
DOG!
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU HERE??


WELL, CUR? SPEAK UP, BEFORE I--
HE WHO SENT THIS GEM BADE ME SAY---
"YAG-KOSHA GIVES A LAST GIFT --AND A LAST ENCHANTMENT!"
NO! NO-- IT CANNOT BE!
HE CANNOT ESCAPE ME THUS. I AM HIS MASTER-- HIS MASTER!
LIKE A MAN IN A DREAM, YARA GRIPS THE MURKY JEWEL IN HIS HANDS-- STARING INTO ITS SHADOWED DEPTHS AS IF THEY WOULD DRAW THE SHUDDERING SOUL FROM HIS BODY---
AND THEN--AS CONAN LOOKS ON IN GROWING HORROR,---
--HE REALIZES THAT THE HIGH PRIEST IS SHRINKING IN STATURE-- GROWING SMALLER, SMALLER BEFORE HIS VERY EYES---
NOW, THE SCARLET GEM TOWERS ABOVE YARA LIKE A HILL---
--FOR SUDDENLY, WITH A FAINTLY ECHOING SCREAM, YARA CLAMBERS IMPOSSIBLY UP ITS SMOOTH SURFACE-- LIKE A MAN CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN OF GLASS--
--AND IT SEEMS TO CONAN THAT SOME GREAT MAGNETIC FORCE PULLS THE PRIEST TO THE GEM-- A FORCE THE PRIEST CANNOT DEFY---
--ONLY TO SINK INTO THE VERY CENTER OF THE JEWEL--
--AS A MAN SINKS INTO A VAST AND BECKONING SEA.

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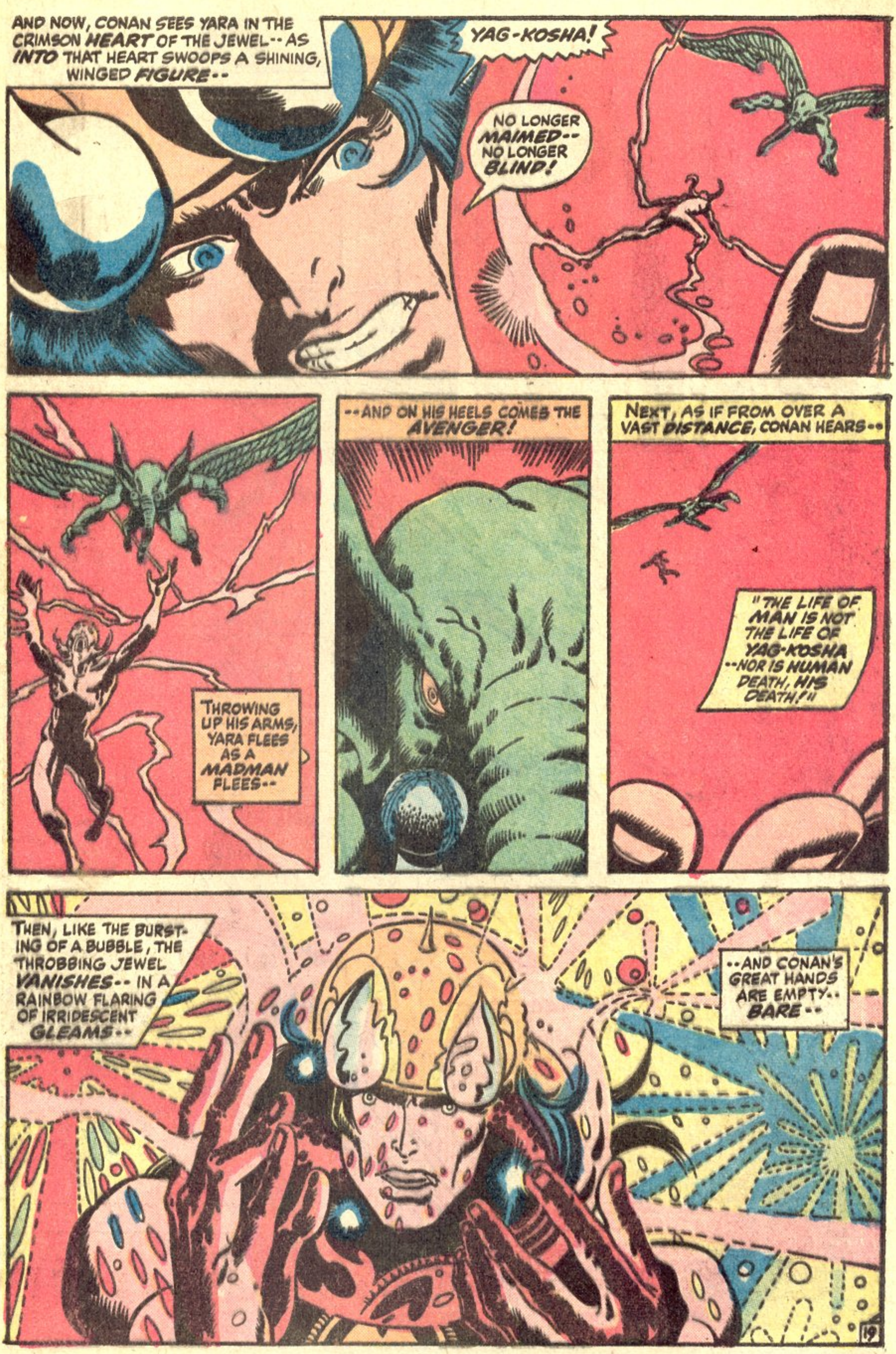
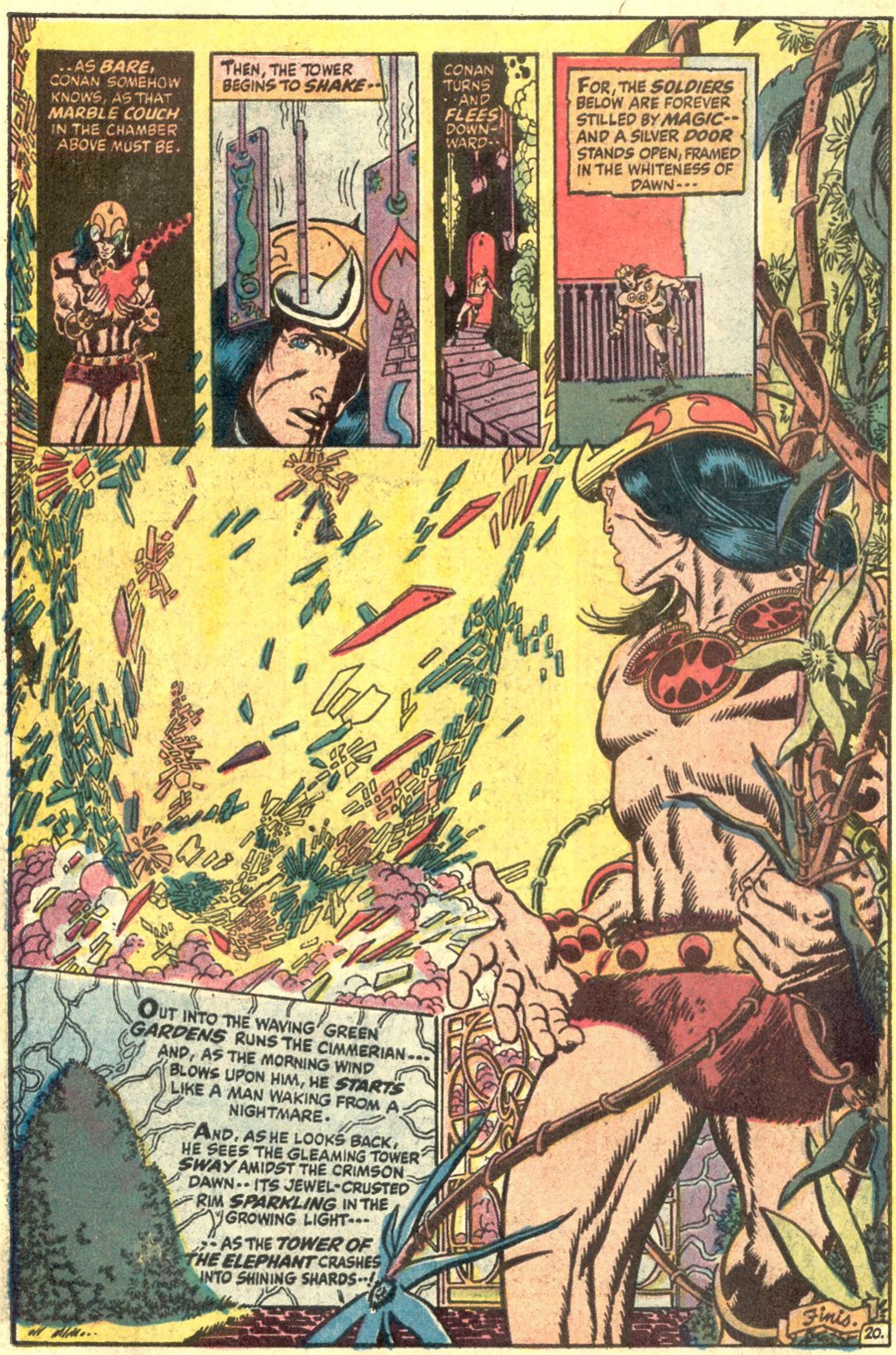

AND NOW, CONAN SEES YARA IN THE CRIMSON HEART OF THE JEWEL-- AS INTO THAT HEART SWOOPS A SHINING, WINGED FIGURE--
YAG-KOSHA!
NO LONGER MAIMED-- NO LONGER BLIND!
THROWING UP HIS ARMS, YARA FLEES AS A MADMAN FLEES--
--AND ON HIS HEELS COMES THE AVENGER!
NEXT, AS IF FROM OVER A VAST DISTANCE, CONAN HEARS--
"THE LIFE OF MAN IS NOT THE LIFE OF YAG-KOSHA --NOR IS HUMAN DEATH, HIS DEATH!"
THEN, LIKE THE BURSTING OF A BUBBLE, THE THROBBING JEWEL VANISHES-- IN A RAINBOW FLARING OF IRRIDESCENT GLEAMS--
--AND CONAN'S GREAT HANDS ARE EMPTY.. BARE--


..AS BARE, CONAN SOMEHOW KNOWS, AS THAT MARBLE COUCH IN THE CHAMBER ABOVE MUST BE.
THEN, THE TOWER BEGINS TO SHAKE--
CONAN TURNS --AND FLEES DOWNWARD--
FOR, THE SOLDIERS BELOW ARE FOREVER STILLED BY MAGIC--AND A SILVER DOOR STANDS OPEN, FRAMED IN THE WHITENESS OF DAWN---
OUT INTO THE WAVING GREEN GARDENS RUNS THE CIMMERIAN---AND, AS THE MORNING WIND BLOWS UPON HIM, HE STARTS LIKE A MAN WAKING FROM A NIGHTMARE.
AND, AS HE LOOKS BACK, HE SEES THE GLEAMING TOWER SWAY AMIDST THE CRIMSON DAWN--ITS JEWEL-CRUSTED RIM SPARKLING IN THE GROWING LIGHT---
--AS THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT CRASHES INTO SHINING SHARDS--!
Finis.